

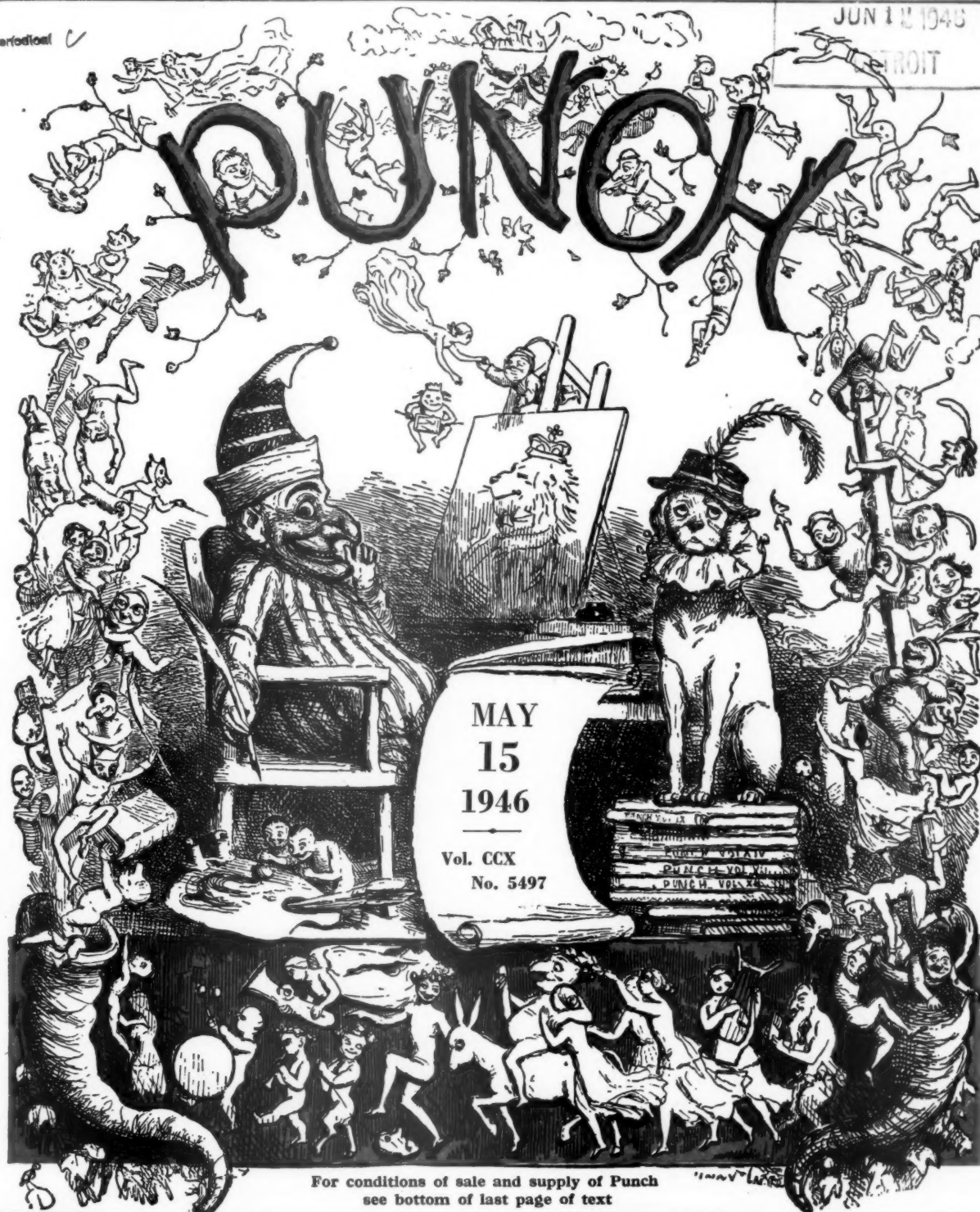
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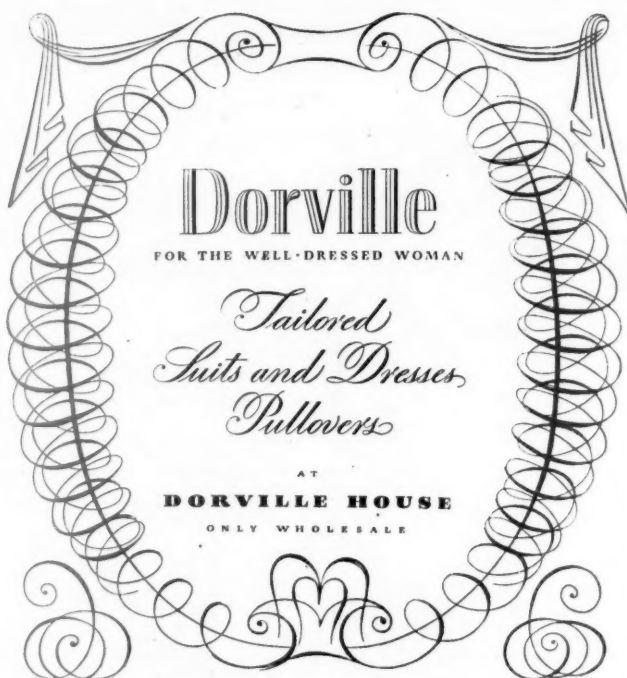


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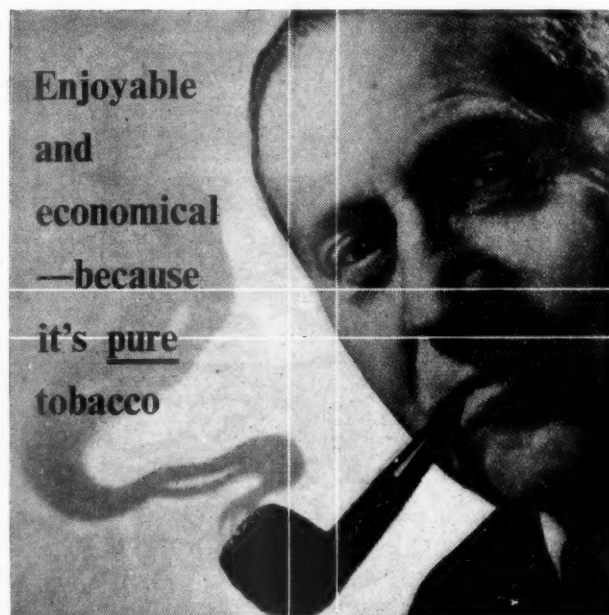


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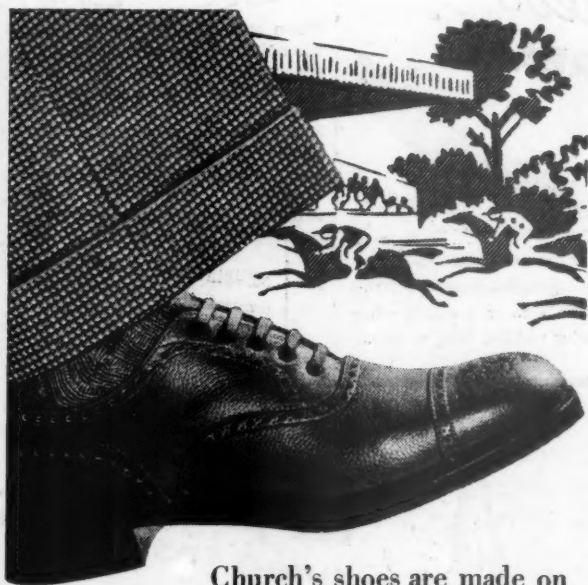
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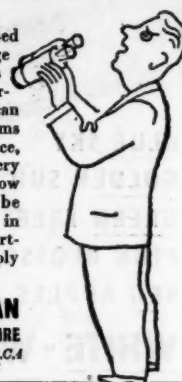
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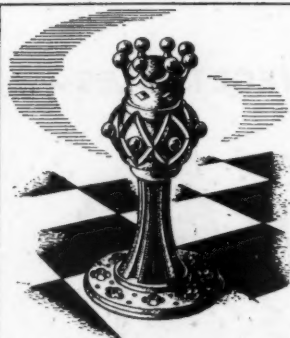
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Railway travel is still unrationed, but seats may be rather scarce during July and August.

Even before the peak months, more seats are usually available on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays than at the week-ends.

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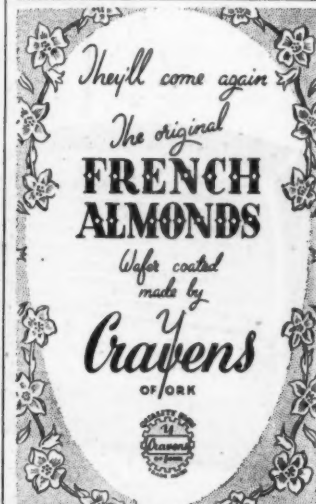
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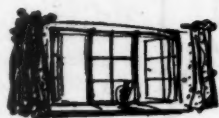
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PUNCH

OR

THE LONDON CHARIVARI



Vol. CCX No. 5497

May 15 1946

Charivaria

A CORRESPONDENT in a Sunday paper, recalling his courting days, says he proposed thirty times before he got "yes" as an answer. Greatly heartened, the other Foreign Ministers are persevering with Mr. Molotov.

Fear of poverty, claims a critic, has been the driving force behind some of the world's finest pieces of fiction. Income-tax officials have known this for years.



"How Can a Man Forget?" runs a magazine article heading. He might try tying a knot in his handkerchief.

The umbrella used by the commissionaire at the door of a West End restaurant was stolen recently. The management says that this won't affect the usual cover charge.

The Vicar in the Woodpile

"Soon after the Rev. B. P. Mohan, Vicar of St. John's and Christ Church, arrived in Penge in 1936, a series of national events took place which started with the destruction by fire of the Crystal Palace and culminated with the outbreak of war in 1939."

"Beckenham and Penge Advertiser."

The Arabian Nights is to be filmed in colour. Don't miss the sequence showing a large pink djinn being poured out of the bottle.

We are asked to say that there is no truth in the rumour that Sir Ben Smith will shortly be elevated to the peerage with the title Baron Cupboard.

We understand that, out of consideration for the condition of some of the cars, the auctioneer at Great Missenden dispensed with his hammer, and contented himself with knocking them down with a feather.



"Everything will grow bigger under glass," says a gardening expert. Is this the long-awaited explanation of the *Daily Express* building?

Le Mot Juste

"They wanted us to go to tea but Mother wouldn't let us because there is a lot of mumps about and she thinks John is thickening for it."

Schoolgirl's letter.

A French dress-designer told the court that he declined to marry his fiancée when he found she was one of twins. It appears he wanted an exclusive model or none.



In Mid-Victorian times it was quite usual to have a harmonium in the drawing-room. A feature of this instrument was the absence of rings from cocktail glasses.

More deliveries of letters are promised. This will enable people taking correspondence courses to learn the piano even quicker.

A visiting screen-star has her meals in private at her London hotel. Other diners take this philosophically as just another item off the menu.

"The service was conducted by the Rev. —, and the hymns sung were 'O Perfect Love' and 'The voice that breathed o'er Eden.' After the Benediction, Mrs. — and Mrs. — sang 'I'll walk beside you'."

Wedding report in local paper.

But we managed on our own, actually.

People engaged in retail trade are not eligible for membership of a certain seaside golf-club. Local butchers have half a mind to discriminate against customers queueing up in plus-fours.

In a Second-Hand Bookshop

IT is cool and dark in the shop, and the air, if you move quietly and set up no dust-disturbing currents, is pleasant to the taste with a faint flavour or undertone of very old port wine. Books will give out this aroma if left untouched for thirty years or so; but there must be a window high up so that the midday sun can strike down upon them, and the door, the door, that is, that leads to the outside world, must be set unobtrusively away in a corner, barred and barricaded off by a high wall of books, to keep the least suspicion of a draught from the central chamber.

Years ago when the proprietor, or perhaps his father before him, was young and eager, stout shelves of well-matured oak were reared against the walls, covering them from floor to ceiling, and here and there jutting out to form bays and L-shaped recesses of almost impenetrable darkness. The spacing between the shelves, three feet and more between the first and second, is seen to diminish as the eye travels upward, an arrangement made no doubt with some idea of setting the tallest and weightiest volumes at ground level and so up on a diminishing scale until the little short-backed Whyte-Melvilles and Waverley Novels nestled cosily against the ceiling. There was also in those far-off days a clearly-conceived intention of grouping the books in some way according to their subject-matter or authorship, and traces of this early plan can still be seen in the occasional contiguity of, for instance, Darwin's *Descent of Man* with Volume I of *Tropical Fish*, and, on one of the topmost shelves, in quite a little run of books dealing with Cones and kindred solids.

But the plan broke down. Probably as early as the eighteen-eighties, perhaps even earlier, but certainly before the close of the last century, Time, the great meddler, had brought to chaos and confusion the work of men's hands. No doubt the Victorians contributed their quota. With that restless, insatiable curiosity of theirs they must forever be taking the books down, flipping through the leaves and returning them upside down to the wrong shelves. Nor were they content to harass the lower and more accessible, but must clamber up ladders and lay their intrusive fingers on the smallest and most retiring titles in the shop. How else account for the presence on the bottom shelf, between two enormous volumes of Dante's *Inferno* (with

popular engravings), of Miss Rhoda Broughton's *Cometh up as a Flower*? They did more. They did not scruple, on the evidence, to wrench the heaviest publications from the bottom shelf itself and to force them back on their sides (one is thinking particularly of the three-foot *Introduction to Ceramic Art in Persia*) two or three shelves higher up, dislodging and scattering about the shop as they did so the first dozen or two volumes of Gibbon. Even if the accumulation of dust were not sufficient evidence of the era in which these great upheavals took place, the very size of the volumes shifted would point unerringly at our grandfathers. Men of their energy and physique are not bred to-day.

Just at what date the practice of handling the books in this shop went out of fashion is hard to say. It may have been about the time that a new cartload of treasures arrived from the sale-rooms and the proprietor, seeing that every inch of his shelf-space was already filled, gave instructions for them to be dumped on the floor. "Put them in the middle there," he must have said, looking up over his spectacles, "I will attend to them presently."

And there, twenty or thirty years on, they remain, a great pile of light and learning measuring about ten feet by six feet by five. They dominate the shop. They gain ten times the attention of all the other books put together, and this is not because they appear in any way attractive or interesting (in fact they are unspeakably appalling) but because there is an unquenchable conviction in the human breast that down at the bottom of such a pile as this will be found—if the knees be allowed to sag and the head be held sufficiently sideways—something quite outstanding in the way of titles. It is not so, but the belief remains. With the result that the visitor, after circling this central block with his head below his knees, has had his fill of books for the time being and is fain to go out into the fresh air again forthwith.

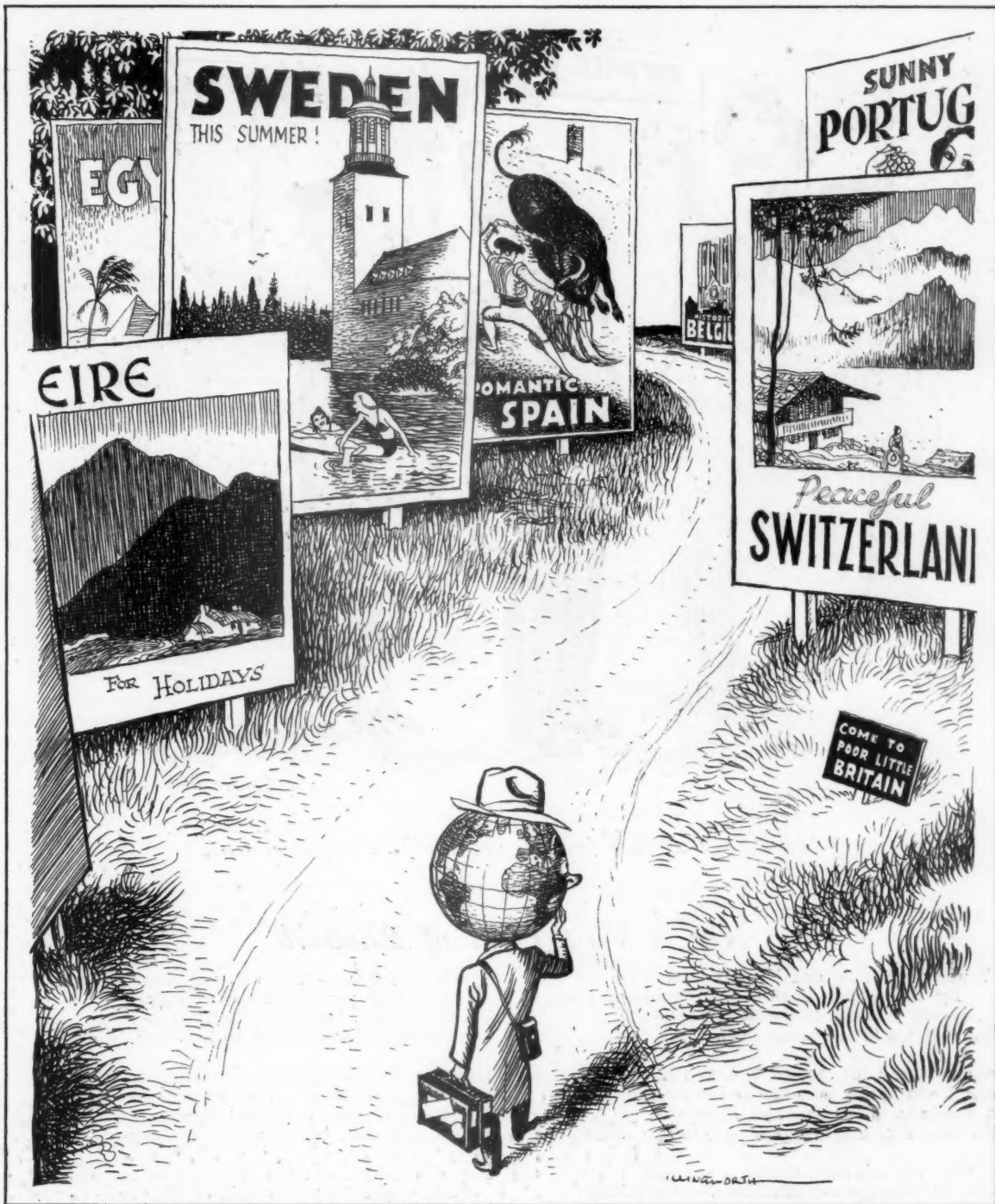
He has handled nothing. Even granted the desire, there is no possibility of taking a volume from the pile because of the great pressure of books bearing down from above. So that unless, in straightening himself up to go out, the visitor inadvertently dislodges some small handbook from the top row, he leaves the place exactly as he found it.

This is all the proprietor asks. Nothing disturbs him so much as the scuffle of rapidly-turned pages or the sound of dust being blown off ancient covers. Except of course the people who come right into his dim recess at the far end and pester him with questions. To these he is always scrupulously polite. His voice, as he tells them that he has nothing in on bird-life at present, he fears, nothing at all, is charged with concern; but his mind is clearly elsewhere, and the inquirer, respecting the man's obvious desire for solitude, tiptoes away without mentioning that he has himself in a swift survey of the shelves already caught sight of Seebohm's *History of British Birds*, Gould's *Birds of Australia* and a gigantic two-volume treatise on Oölogy in French. Even if, being a natural busybody, he does mention these facts, the proprietor preserves his courtesy. "Yes," he says—"Yes. There is not much demand for books of that kind nowadays." And there the matter rests.

What the proprietor does and how he lives are a mystery. He may write articles for encyclopaedias. Possibly he supports himself by blackmail, or it may be that his shop is the headquarters of some spy-ring. The one astonishing, undeniable fact is his supreme reluctance to sell books.

H. F. E.





THE TOURIST TO BE

"Funny they don't do a little more to attract me to that place!"

[This year's Government grant to the Travel Association, for the encouragement of foreign visitors to this country, amounts to only a small fraction of the sums allotted for similar purposes abroad.]



"Here's just the thing for you, sir—Row B, two gangway seats."

On a Vast Field of Rhubarb

IT was the Spring, and I would wander far
By hill and dale in all their fresh-prinked glory.
Actually I would do the job by car—
But that has little bearing on the story.

I wandered, and the chiff-chaff chaffed and chuffed;
And I and Spring were one and new-created,
But suddenly this ecstasy got biffed,
Knocked flat, knocked sideways, totally deflated.

And why, you ask me? Reader (I ask you),
Does just one piece of rhubarb age you quickly?
One tiny piece? And, if so, what of two?
Five hundred? Fourteen acres, planted thickly?

Yes, *rhubarb*, fourteen acres of the stuff,
All waiting to be soggy, slimy, sappy,
Tepid and sloppy—isn't that enough
To stop the normal person being happy?

That's what I saw—that rank and growing threat,
Innumerable portions, limp and stringy,
Slippery, pulpy, lukewarm, sloshy, wet—
No wonder that I ceased to feel, well, Springy.

Had they been weeds I would have gone my road,
Writing them off as one of Nature's errors,
But *Man's* was the hand that planted them, that sowed
That nightmare bed of vegetable terrors.

That dimmed my sun, that shrivelled up my bud—
That thought about "though Everything looks Topping"—
How does it go?—"and only Man is Dud"—
That is what got me absolutely hopping.

I turned for home. My day had turned to night.
Gone was the vernal urge, the May Day passion,
The soul, etc., winging to the light . . .
But, there you are, it saved the petrol ration.

A Modern Portrait

GOING to see an exhibition of pictures the other day, I went straight up to one of them, ignoring a hundred and forty-two, for the rather inadequate reason that I had heard several people talking about it. Well, it would not have been an inadequate reason if they had greatly praised it; but, as it was, they had all been doing the opposite. And I am glad I went, for I might otherwise have accepted their hasty opinions. I must say that, at first sight, I agreed with them, and the picture seemed to me to be all they had said of it. It was a picture of a woman, if you could call her such, standing in a very smooth fawn-coloured landscape, that went right to a pale-green sky, beside a thin ruined tower full of odd angles. Looking at it close, the picture seemed quite impossible, so I stepped back four or five paces and sat on a bench to look at it, so as to give it every chance, and I was just about to decide that it could be no likeness of anybody on earth when I glanced at a lady who was sitting on the same bench. Then I saw how wrong I had been. The likeness was astonishing, and she was obviously sitting in front of her own portrait. So perfectly had the artist got her likeness that I could not help turning away from her portrait to gaze at her. This of course she saw, but did not resent, as she showed by saying at once, "Do you think it is like me?"

"It is marvellous," I said. "A speaking likeness. How did you come to be like that?"

My last remark sounds so rude that I should like to take up a little space in explaining it. To begin with, it was wrong from me by surprise—the surprise of finding myself so completely wrong, and all my friends wrong who had told me about this picture, believing it to be unnatural; and there she was beside me, with the same long Victorian dress right to the ground that there was in the picture, the same forehead of steel, or bright metal, with a wisp of rusted iron above it in the form of a query mark, and one of those small horns sometimes carried on bicycles, in place of a nose, with one eye just below it. And I noticed that one of her hands was a lobster's pair of claws, while the other one was a spanner, with a gold wedding-ring on one of the horns of the implement, neat and well-fitting as it was in the picture. Her only other ornament was an oval brooch in gold, framing a miniature of a gentleman wearing whiskers, and a few jet buttons down the front of the black dress. As I have said, my words were wrong from me. But she took no exception to them, and answered at once. "My mother was a late-Victorian lady," she said, "and my father was a bicycle; a lady's bicycle, you know."

I glanced at her again and saw it all in a flash, the long dress, the cameo, and then the bright drops of rain on her metal forehead, and a few faint stains of rust, marking some earlier drops.

"Yes, yes, of course," I said. And I could not at first think of anything

more to say to her, till I remembered something that had puzzled me, at first sight, over the tower. "That tower," I said, "the one you were standing by. Was it quite safe? I was wondering if it might not have fallen."

"But why?" she asked.

And all I could find to say was "The force of gravity."

"Oh, that's quite superseded now," she said.

And again I said "Yes, of course."

And with her next remark we luckily got away from modern science, of which I really know nothing; for she looked up at her portrait again, and said to me: "Do you think I take more after my mother?"

But, as I was beginning to get a little bit bewildered, I hurriedly spoke of the artist, instead of answering her question, and said what a wonderful likeness he had got. And this could not be denied, and somehow left little to talk about; so little that she soon got up from the bench and hurried away. And it was not till I saw the swift gliding movement with which she went down the gallery, that I noticed, what her long skirts had prevented my seeing before, that she had wheels instead of feet. One snort through the bicycle-horn may have been some sort of farewell.

It only shows that one should not say of any portrait that it is like nothing on earth, as a good many people are too ready to do, until one is quite sure.

ANON.

Misfortune of a Correspondent

IT is now over a week since I became aware of the first disquieting symptoms. People agree on the whole, I think, that the majority of smells are pretty well indigenous; we do not, for instance, find a tiled-bathroom-and-bath-salts smell wandering downstairs to the kitchen, or a motor-mower-and-grass-mowings smell appearing from nowhere in the bedroom. I was not a little startled, therefore, when an unmistakable antique-shop-and-silver-polish smell suddenly began haunting me while I was engaged in vacuum-cleaning the dining-room carpet. I sniffed hither and thither, trying to pick up the trail, but in vain, for there didn't seem to be any trail, and I continued my work resignedly, hoping

that I would not be thus afflicted for long.

On the following morning at breakfast, however, worse was to follow. Suddenly, as I was about to consume my omelette, I became aware of an overpowering odour of stale-cigar-and-port-wine. (Or it might have been the characteristic lamp-shade-that-has-caught-fire-due-to-slipping-from-its-moorings-and-being-in-close-contact-with-the-electric-light-bulb-for-over-a-week aroma.) My wife answered my inquiry if there was a curious smell in the room with some coldness. I think she thought I was casting aspersions on the food, for she has been working under difficulties of late, her only raw materials being cheese and dried milk. At any rate, she didn't smell anything

funny. Since then I have been constantly pursued by scents that have somehow got separated from their parental surroundings. I have smelt moth-balls on top of Brecon Hill, haystacks while boating in the Serpentine, and garden soil while lunching at the club. But what finally unnerved me was smelling *Whitaker's Almanack* everywhere at a cocktail party.

However, I have since discovered that all that the situation demands is a little mental readjustment. Interpreting a boiled-egg smell as shoe-polish, or vice versa, may sound somewhat abstruse in theory, but is really quite simple once you get the hang of it. It would be interesting to compare notes with a reader who has had a similar experience.

Scrapbook for Nineteen-Umpy-Ump

(With acknowledgments to the B.B.C.)

AGAINST a roll of drums and the trembling of a large piece of corrugated iron, two or three brass instruments begin to play "Auld Lang Syne." Then—

DEEP VOICE. Ladies and gentlemen: Scrapbook for Nineteen-Umpy-Ump! (*Chords from the orchestra.*) Nineteen-Umpy-Ump—that wonderful year, which had hardly begun before we were all dancing to the tune of the daring new song, "Chimneys in the Fairway" . . . (*Orchestra plays something that sounds old-fashioned and corny. Girl's voice sings the last words of the chorus—*)

SINGING GIRL. Chim—nees in the fair—way
Are in a fair—way
To give me the pip!

DEEP VOICE. Pip! It was the year in which, on January 2, hardly anybody noticed that there were only five pips in the six o'clock time-signal. Hardly anybody except Mr. Ethelbert Tilk . . .

PIP—PIP—PIP—PIP—PIP (*Pause.*)

MR. TILK. There were only five pips then!

DERISIVE VOICE. Garn!

MR. TILK. I tell you there were only five pips!

DERISIVE VOICE. So what?

DEEP VOICE. But Mr. Tilk refused to be discouraged. He set out to *prove* that there had been only five pips. Meanwhile . . . The page of Scrapbook turns! (*The corrugated iron shakes.*) And we recall that in February a first visit was paid to this country by a comparatively unknown pianist, Smothery Oven. (*Piano rattles through part of a Bach Gigue.*) And nobody took very much notice, did they, Mr. Oven?

SMOTHERY OVEN. I'll say.

DEEP VOICE. So what did you do?

FALSETTO VOICE (*chanting*). If at first you don't succeed—Scriabin! (*Piano plays Scriabin, fading gradually into loud applause as—*)

DEEP VOICE. But for those with less cultivated taste, what had the stage to offer in Nineteen-Umpy-Ump? Let's turn the page of Scrapbook (*corrugated iron shakes*) and see. While Mr. Tilk was writing to *The Times*—

MR. TILK. Sir: I should be grateful if you would allow me to trespass on your valuable space to point out that the B.B.C., with their customary vandalism, cut short a perfect rendering of the six o'clock time-signal . . .

DEEP VOICE (*interrupting*). —the spectacular musical show, *Broth O'Bhoy, the Irish Steward*, was beginning its run at the Rhinodrome. And here are the sweet singing sisters Hevna Buv and Muna Buv to sing you the song they made famous in the second act.

(*They do so. The final chord fades into "ominous" music backed with explosions, then—*)

DEEP VOICE (*continuing*). But in the outside world all was not well. The Samoa-Alaskan War was at its height. Here is Reilly Speekin, who was a war correspondent in that anxious time.

REILLY SPEEKEN. On this very day of the month umpy-ump years ago, I was trekking along the Samoa-Alaskan frontier, looking for my bicycle.

(*Sounds suggestive of smashing through jungle and cracking through ice.*)

HOARSE VOICE. Mush! Mush! Giddap! Why, Mr. Speekin, what you lookin' for dah?

REILLY SPEEKEN (*exhausted*). I'm . . . looking . . . for . . . my . . . bicy—oh, there it is. (*Loud chord.*)

DEEP VOICE. The page of Scrapbook turns! (*Corrugated iron shakes.*) And in June a question was asked in the House.

PRECISE VOICE. To ask the Postmaster-General whether . . . I should say, if . . . he is aware that on Umpday, January 2 of this year the time-signal broadcast by the B.B.C. contained only five pips instead of the statutory six, and if he will take care that in future . . .

DEEP VOICE (*interrupting*). But in June most people were more interested in the stories that were going round about the making of the wonderful new film, *Arcades Akimbo*, starring Gary Cucumber. Here is Ole Smojk, who directed the film.

OLE SMOJK. They were grand days, though I do say it myself. But I was always one to call an escapade an escapade. It was while we were making the great glue-factory scene that some visitors were announced.

(*Sound: bubbling glue and Mendelssohn's Spring Song. Sudden silence as—*)

EXCITED VOICE. Here they come!

OLE SMOJK. Oh, a thousand thunders!

BOOMING VOICE (*announcing*). Their Eminent Highnesses the Seismograph and Seismographine of Hangover! (*Something that sounds like a national anthem.*)

DEEP VOICE. Yes, for these exalted personages were touring Britain in Nineteen-Umpy-Ump.

YORKSHIREMAN. Ave you seen the Seismograph?

SCOTSWOMAN. Yon Seismographine's a bonny wee—

MIDLANDER. When they come to Bairmingham—

COCKNEY. What I say is—'ooray!

DEEP VOICE. It was on a particularly fine day that they passed through Walsall, to the strains of one of the most popular compositions of the year . . . (*Manny Festo and his Announcemen plunge into "The Walsall Concerto." A few bars from the end—*)

FLAT VOICE (*expressionless*). Charged to-day at Bow Street with causing an obstruction, Ethelbert Tilk, an undertaker's roundsman, was said to have walked up Portland Place leading an elephant on which was a placard reading WHO SWALLOWED THE PIP? Mr. Smith, defending, said . . .

DEEP VOICE (*interrupting*). And it was in this year that Henry Picklefork, a provincial carpenter and joiner, surprised the literary world by publishing, as a very old man, his personal reminiscences of Shelley.

EAGER VOICE. And did you once see Shelley plane?

HENRY PICKLEFORK. Ah, I did that, but I see 'im use the ole saw a durn sight oftener.

(*And so on till we come to "Auld Lang Syne" again.*)

R. M.

On Certain Messes

THEY never read. They vault and leap.

They fine you if you fall asleep.

They bring in pretty things in mink,

And charge you for your gin they drink.

They take your cane, they bump your car,

They mark your letters "Try the bar."

They eat to-morrow's food to-night.

When nothing's left to do, they fight.

There's Nothing Quite Like It.

ARE you the worrying type? You are? Well, thank your lucky stars and don't let up. And for goodness' sake don't listen to careless talk about looking for silver linings and all that. Worry never hurt anybody, remember that. It keeps your mind feverishly active and there's nothing like a feverishly active mind for getting on in life.

There is no secret about worrying. Almost anybody can do it with a little practice. Start worrying about little things and work up gradually to major dilemmas and momentous issues. Worry first thing in the morning in the bathroom—about the colour of your tooth-brush, the water-rate and the mirror. And keep it up all day—in the bus, at the office, everywhere. Worry about your health, whether it is improving or deteriorating; and about your age, whether it is increasing fast enough. Nothing is too trivial to worry about.

Some people never worry at all; you can tell that merely by looking at them. Their faces are smooth and unlined, as uninteresting as a pair of new shoes. They sleep soundly every night for eight or nine hours at a stretch. Just think of that—one-third of every day, week, month and year thrown away, lost utterly and irrecoverably in unconscious stupor. One-third of a lifetime. The next time you worry yourself into insomnia think of all those who are burning up their lives in useless sleep.

Worry is supposed to cause loss of appetite. Well, what of it? Who wants to go on eating the same kinds of food year in, year out? You know what bread, potatoes, mutton, cheese and the rest taste like, don't you? Eating gets you nowhere. You can pick up all you need to know about it in a few hours; there's certainly no need for all the senseless repetition that goes on. Do you read a poem every day just because you happened to like it the first time? Of course not. People who worry themselves sick save about three hours every day and they don't have to wash up afterwards.

Worry is obviously good for the nerves. It puts them through their paces until they can stand up to anything. People who can't worry have no nerves and miss all the best things in life. Years ago I was a non-worrier. I couldn't fret about anything. If I had a pain or an ache I used to laugh myself to sleep about it. I used to

chuckle continuously about the international situation and my overdraft. I didn't even worry about not worrying. Then one day somebody took me to a psychiatrist. He put it all down to the fact that I hadn't been scared stiff as a child.

He took me in hand and built me up patiently. He taught me to bite my nails and to sit drumming my fingers on desks and tables. To improve my drumming he fitted little thimbles over my finger-tips.

He taught me to look at the clock with a new eye—to wonder whether it was fast or slow, whether it had stopped or started. In time I got so that I could worry about whether it would fall to pieces or blow up.

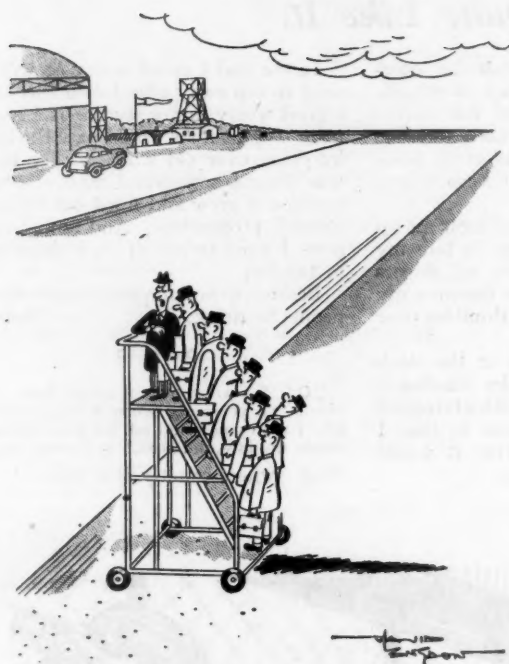
In the end I could worry at will. I used to slip away after lunch and have a good worry in my study. If I had a train to wait for I would pass the time by going over old worries. My brain was always active and with constant exercise it grew and filled out to comfortable proportions. And now, I suppose, I must be one of the richest men in London.

Besides, worry unquestionably drives people to drink. HOD.

“Q. ‘I always had a round face until about two years ago when it began falling off. I wish you would tell me what to do to fatten my face and neck.’”—*Toronto paper*.
First—where exactly is it now?



"That's the lot, sir; will you just sign 'ere to say that all 'as been received in good order?"



"Late, aren't they?"

After Six Years

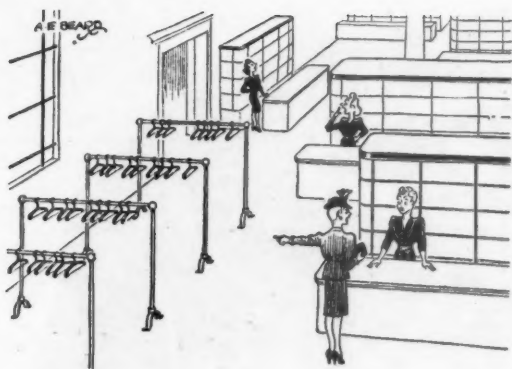
AFTER six years with what fervour I take up my pen!
 I have known nine hundred moods and few of them nice.
 I have lived the plots of a thousand novels and ten Epopees, eight odes and a lecture on lice.
 I have tasted bitterness in a hundred officers' messes
 And have shared billets with ineluctable smells.
 I have lain and dreamed of far-away Ascot and the pretty dresses
 In the hills to the left as you go into Tunbridge Wells.
 In the blast of bombs and the heat of heartless summers
 I have grown portly and pasty-faced,
 And have learnt to defend my own against all comers
 By going to bed with my small-kit tied to my waist.
 I have seen life from every impossible attitude,
 Starting a self-possessed recruit,
 And later, with fewer hairs and far less latitude,
 Eagerly acknowledging the occasional salute.
 Many a hideous face I've met, many a strange rough tongue
 I've heard as tropical nights swooped down,
 And I've seen weird dances and heard weird chants being sung,
 Such as, for instance, "Knees up, Mother Brown."
 Here are my themes, then, rich in something and sorrow
 And flecked with triumph, brief as a butcher's wink.
 Here at my beck are my yesterdays; what of to-morrow?
 Ah! to-morrow I must look for the ink.

Progress

PROGRESS, which may be defined as whatever whoever is talking happens to be thinking about life at the time, is a big subject and one to which I shall not attempt to do justice in the limited space at my disposal. In other words, I am beginning with a few notes on wool-winding, and if the more spirited of my readers ask why I should bring wool-winding into an article on progress I can only answer that it is that sort of article.

Wool-winding, by which I mean winding wool from a skein—the technical term for a collection of large loops—into a ball, is one of those domestic processes as necessary as they are unnecessary. In this respect it is like getting the crumbs up round (by which I mean under) someone else's feet with a carpet-sweeper, though otherwise it is not like it at all. Not even the most educated or dreamiest among us would deny that wool needs winding into a ball before it can be knitted with, but a lot of people feel personally aggrieved when they see a skein coming out from a knitting-bag. This is because they are afraid the knitter is going to ask them to hold their arms out, with their thumbs sticking up, for the wool to be pegged over their hands and wound off by the knitter. They can picture it all with dreadful clarity, even to the way they will have to rock their arms to get the wool off their thumbs and to the time it takes to get through a skein—a time which can only be assessed as the opposite of the time it takes to get through a gramophone record. True enough, my readers will say; but what has this to do with progress? Well, it has a lot to do with it. Several years ago, no one knows exactly when, but within the knitting lifetime of all of us, people gave up winding wool on other people. They found that it did not pay; that the reluctance vibrating from the arm-rocker, however disguised as rueful good nature, could not be made up for by even the sort of apology that cancels taking the last toffee. Not that, in the last phases of this kind of wool-winding, there was much rueful good nature around. Arm-rockers were apt to go on reading, letting their arms sag together and their thumbs flop, till by common consent the practice virtually died out and knitters found they could wind their wool just as well by spreading the skein out on their lap. Psychologists, who were never much good at holding their arms up anyway, consider this a notable example of progress; but they say that some experiences die hard, and that it will be a long time before unwound skeins of wool cease to strike a mild fear into the onlookers; particularly as the average onlooker is still chivalrous enough to offer to hold the wool, though wily enough to wait till the knitter has begun winding and the danger is over.

I mentioned carpet-sweeping round people's feet, and it occurs to me that my readers might like to know if there has been any progress here. Frankly, no. The people with the feet do gradually make some individual progress over lifting their feet before the driver of the carpet-sweeper runs into them—psychologists call this adapting ourselves to our environment, or, when they are off duty, plain common-sense—but there is as yet no change of general feeling towards carpet-sweepers, no code of rules governing those who sit with their feet on the crumbs. On the other hand there has been, as I need hardly remind my readers, a positive revolution in the washing-up and drying-up world. A few years ago there were only two categories here, those who had to and those who didn't have to. These two categories have now been amalgamated into one (my readers will know which one), but there has emerged



"Three coat-bangers, please."

a small extra category, the people who put away. These may be defined as the people left over after the last drying-up cloth has been bagged. Lazy they may be, but they are also a little lonely, in direct contrast to that hub of things, the washer-up. Washers-up may be consistent dryer-up who have thus served their apprenticeship, or eager volunteers who either hate washing-up and therefore say they like it or like it and are therefore believed to hate it. Since the early days of these mass drying-up operations (washing-up is the single-handed battle it always was, however dramatized now by sympathy), much progress has been made in what industrialists call the division of labour, and any dryer-up who does not stay for the sauce-pans will come in for a good deal of self-criticism.

Philologists—those rather truculent people who mill round among the origins of language—report that progress in their department is such that if they were willing to admit everything people said as language they would hardly know where they were. Slang changes so fast that no one feels quite safe after a certain age which can only be defined as the age we know we have got to when we think about how we are making out over the words we use. There is a carefree period early on in life when people speak an ageless, inherited slang, when they can say things are tophole and can spell ripping with one "p" and evoke a fine sense of vanished youth from grown-ups. But in adult life people who say things are tophole had better be careful to make it clear by their voice that they are only being funny if they want to be considered moderately up-to-date—moderately up-to-date, psychologists tell us, being all that normal people want to be. The general slang situation has boiled down to a compromise between advancing age and fashion, with people sticking to the words they like until another lot seeps in. Philologists, though it is not strictly their department, also report that the average bus-ticket transaction—that is, the passenger giving the conductor a sixpence, the conductor giving the passenger fourpence in three pennies and two halfpennies, the passenger adding it up and putting it away and the conductor punching the ticket and handing it to the passenger—involves no fewer than a quite surprising number of "thank you's." Perhaps it is their department after all, for the words "thank you," on this occasion, have telescoped into an entirely new word which sounds as much like "kewp" as anything else. I don't know that it is an instance of progress one way or another, but I didn't want to leave it out.

Finally, a few miscellaneous observations. Lampshades have of late become notably fluted, and people who stuck to the plain kind have just about gone under, by which I mean that they don't like the plain kind any longer but are still rather surprised that they don't. Passe-partout frames have lost their grip on the rising generation, who never found it easy not to leave gaps at the corners. Spectacles which hinge in the middle and fold into cases half the size are growing in number but still count as very progressive, because people who have the old sort cannot do anything about them beyond saying something chirpy to the owners of the new sort. As for piano-playing and art-appreciation, both have seen a bit of a change; there seem to be fewer conscripts among piano-learners, so that people who say they have never learnt the piano are now considered rather public-spirited, or not without good reason; while art has gone slightly the other way, with a growing feeling that people who still say they don't like art represent nothing but their own obstinacy.

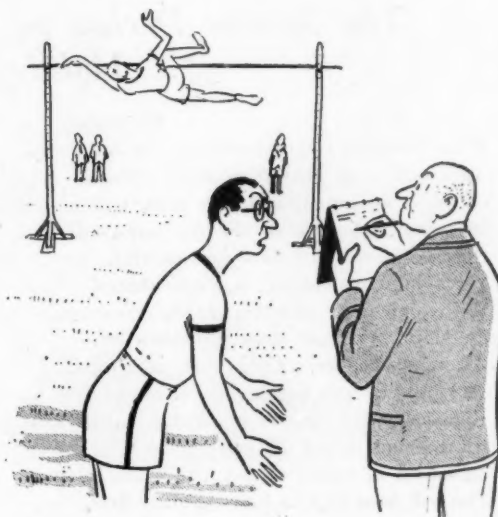
Sporting Note

"The story is going the rounds of how Mr. —, a Rhodes scholar now studying at Oxford, showed aristocratic English huntsmen a point or two in the matter of fox-hunting—just by being the first to pick off the only two foxes which broke cover during the hunt. His companions expressed great admiration of his ability as a shotist."—*Orange Free State paper.*

"Feature in Stock Markets to-day was the sharp fluctuations in Brewery shares on the news that output is to be cut by 15 per cent. Jobbers widened and marked down prices at the opening, and losses of up to 5s. were recorded in the leaders at one time. Very little selling was encountered, however, and some good recoveries took place after lunch."—*"Evening Standard" City Column.*

Livers hardened, as usual.

Hollowood



"It's an optical illusion, I tell you. He's going under."

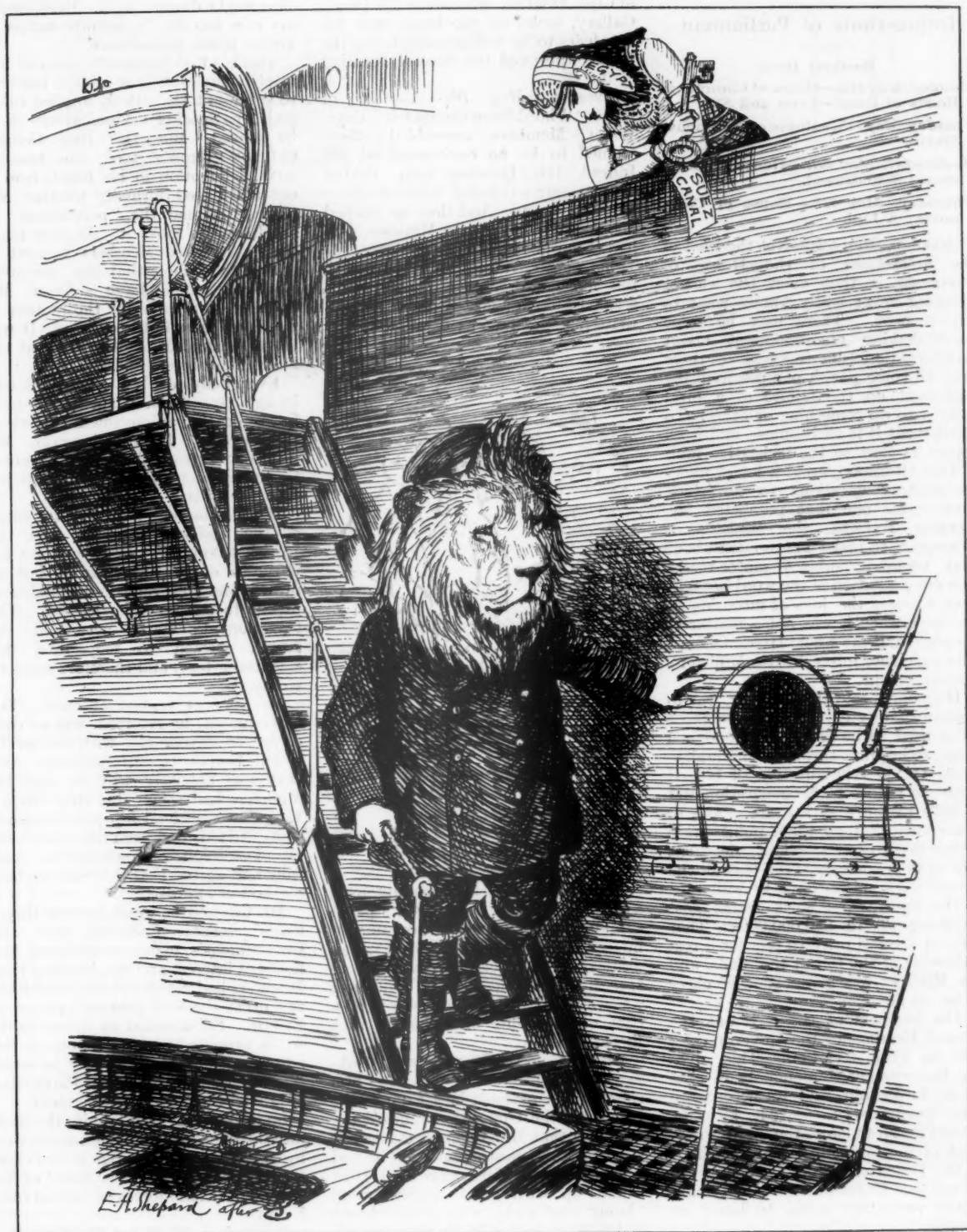


"No—no buses, I'm afraid—but they say there's a post-chaise stops here every first Friday night after full moon."

The Smiths Decide to Spend Their First Peace-time Holiday at Brighton.

Soe they
With cheerfull countenance the vacant dayes
Anticipate; hee glad from toyle releas'd
Of drear accompts, and shee from tedious round
Of tasks domestick, or (by *Ben* enjoyn'd)
Of seeking, oft with slow and painfull care,
Their daily sustenance; nor less imbued
With joye their offspring, eager to prevent
Sweet liberty from stern pedantick rule,
Examination dire. Their pulse consum'd,
The great consult began. Anon arose
High argument, suggestion strong, and scheme
Impertinent or apt, by each to each
Advanc'd in equall voyce. As when in sport
The ball from foot to foot obliquely flies
Now forward, now regressive, ere the goal
Attain'd; soe unavailing prove and vain

Their severall counsels, all by mutual power
Annull'd, and hard necessity of means
By *Dalton's* greedy hand despoil'd. But shee,
The lesser man, yet still with shriller voyce
Endow'd (sad instrument of all our woe)
By force prevails; and they with one consent,
Reluctant yet perswaded, steadfast chuse
Their destin'd place: not where th' *Hesperian* wave
Romantick roars, and horrid cliffs confront
The far *Hispanian* land, or rowling seas
Break on the *Orient* shores, or *Northern* mists
Invest the utmost *Isles*, but where of old
By *Southern* main the sportive *Prince* inspir'd
From rustick solitude a busie Towne
Luxurious, and erst with alien Art
Domes, Temples, Turrets, Minarets and Tow'rs
Uprais'd fantastick. . . .



CLEOPATRA AND THE LION

Impressions of Parliament

Business Done

Monday, May 6th.—House of Commons: Roads of Peace—Land and Sky.

Tuesday, May 7th.—House of Commons: Storm.

Wednesday, May 8th.—House of Commons: Withdrawal.

Thursday, May 9th.—House of Commons: A Lull.

Monday, May 6th.—Not the least of the attractions of the House of Commons is that even the closest observer never really knows what to expect next. There may be some world-shaking announcement about an international development—or there may be some parish-pump-convulsing statement on the failure of a rural council to do something or other. To Parliament it is all business, and it all comes as grist to the legislative mill.

This afternoon, amid a lot of none-too-exciting questions to Ministers, there came one that permitted Mr. ALFRED BARNES, the Minister of Transport, to make a statement about that nostalgic subject motor-roads. The mere mention of the word brought back to most the joys of motoring in the days when it was not a matter of coupons, and the whole House listened with unfeigned interest to the Minister's announcement.

His policy, said the Minister, was to promote safety on the roads, to assist what used to be called the depressed areas, to improve through-communications, to aid rehabilitation of blitzed areas, to reduce traffic congestion and to help Britain's agriculture. And to make sure that all these points were given their proper weight, decisions had to be made now, even though the actual work might have to wait.

The first year's work might cost anything up to £80,000,000. That seemed a small price to pay for a real reduction in the toll of the roads, and the Minister was given another cheer as he sat down.

The business of the day was the Second Reading of the Government's Bill on Civil Aviation. This gives the Government a monopoly in civil flying in Britain, and its acceptance was persuasively moved by Mr. HERBERT MORRISON, the Lord President of the Council, Acting-President of the Board of Trade, Leader of the House, and Governmental Handyman, whose versatility seems to know no bounds.

Some Members expressed disquiet about this latest piece of nationalization, but Lord WINSTER, the Minister

of Civil Aviation, who sat in the Peers' Gallery, looks far too benevolent for any fears to be well-grounded. So the House approved the Second Reading of the Bill.

Tuesday, May 7th.—Another of those "Who'd-have-thought-it" days. When Members assembled there seemed to be no excitement at all. Indeed the Question-hour drifted unexcitingly—almost somnolently—along to its end. And then up jumped Mr. ATTLEE, the Prime Minister, who had been looking intently over the Table at Mr. WINSTON CHURCHILL in full morning-dress. Mr. CHURCHILL seemed a trifle agitated about a type-written paper he was examining.



OUT OF THE HAT
THE MINISTER OF TRANSPORT

The Prime Minister—reading from a duplicate of Mr. CHURCHILL's paper—announced that the Government intended to withdraw all British naval, military and air forces from Egypt as speedily as possible. This, he explained, was to facilitate the conclusion of a pact of friendship and alliance with Egypt.

All the time the Premier was speaking, Mr. CHURCHILL watched him closely. The moment he sat down, the Leader of the Opposition jumped up, declaring that Mr. ATTLEE's statement was one of the most momentous he had ever heard. Things that had been "built up with great labour" were "being cast away with great shame and folly." And, said Mr. CHURCHILL, with determination, he should ask Mr. Speaker's permission to move the adjournment of the House, so that

they might discuss (as the Parliamentary rule has it), "a definite matter of urgent public importance."

This is a task frequently essayed but rarely successful. The motion has first to surmount the strictly-applied rules, and Mr. Speaker seldom allows it to be moved. But this time Colonel CLIFTON BROWN took the hastily-scribbled motion in his hand, read it out and asked formally whether Mr. CHURCHILL had the "permission" of the House to move it. At once more than a hundred Members jumped to their feet to show that they assented. As forty would have sufficed, Mr. Speaker gave leave for the motion to be moved later in the evening. It was the first time for eight years that the motion had been allowed.

Everybody drifted out, to hurry in again as seven o'clock—the time fixed for the adjournment debate—approached. In the interval, Mr. ANTHONY EDEN had prepared his notes for the opening speech—and a fine job he made of it.

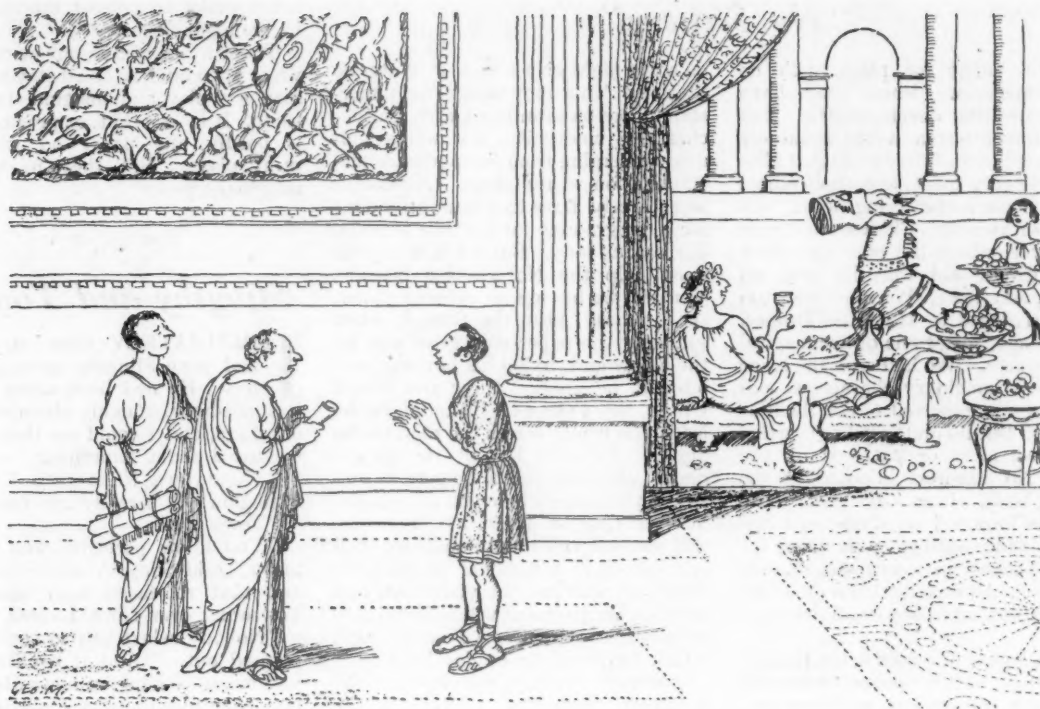
It was a factual, realistic, statement of the position, stressing that the British troops were in Egypt, not for purposes of personal health, but to protect the vital Suez Canal, link and lifeline to our far-flung Empire. The Government's hasty act, said Mr. EDEN, seemed to jeopardize this essential artery, and therefore must be wrong.

Mr. ATTLEE replied at once. The Government, he retorted, was as concerned as anyone else with the safety of our Empire communications. And that was precisely why he and his Ministers had taken this step—to get Egypt's true friendship and co-operation. All this had been discussed with the Dominion representatives—and they had agreed that this was the best method of approach.

Mr. CHURCHILL wound up the three-hours' debate, declaring that the Government's policy endangered the national interest and emphasizing that Ministers had acted without consulting any other shade of political opinion in Britain. So, unusual as it was to do so, he proposed to force a vote on the adjournment motion, if only to make it clear that he and his Party disapproved the Government's move.

So into the division lobbies the rival forces trooped. The Government won by 327 votes to 158. But it was clear that the last had not been heard of the subject of British forces in—or out of—Egypt.

We had certainly not heard the last of the business of the day—interrupted to make way for the adjournment debate. Long after ten o'clock in the



"I'm sorry, gentlemen. Caligula cannot see anyone at the moment—he's lunching with the Consul."

evening the House settled down to a nice long cosy chat (as they call it at Mothers' Meetings) on guaranteeing loans for various purposes.

At times the chat was neither nice nor cosy, but long it most certainly was. So long, in fact, that the hands of the clock pointed to 5.22 as honourable and weary Members went home.

Wednesday, May 8th.—Yet another of those "You-never-know" days. The jaded House—which can do without sleep no better than the rest of us—struggled dutifully through the Question-hour, with only those ever-wakeful officials, the Clerks at the Table, really showing an intelligent interest in things.

Then Mr. ATTLEE rose and went to the Table. He explained that he had been "led away" last night into alleging that the Dominion representatives in London had "agreed" to the plan to withdraw from Egypt. In fact the Dominion representatives had discussed the matter but had not been asked to agree, for it was an act of the Government in the United Kingdom, for which he took full responsibility.

The House gasped a little at this statement, for it remembered that when Mr. CHURCHILL had, overnight, shown some signs of incredulity at the Prime Minister's claim that the Dominions had "agreed," Mr. ATTLEE had been very rough with him and had snapped angrily that the Opposition Leader had not been at the talks. However, the House is always very ready to forgive a repentant or apologetic Member, and, as Mr. CHURCHILL had by then left for Holland, there to be the guest of Queen Wilhelmina, the incident was allowed to close.

The House went on to talk about the New Towns Bill, which will enable the Government to make new towns out of old villages. That this process is not universally popular—especially in the old villages—had been brought home to Mr. LEWIS SILKIN, the Minister of Town and Country Planning, a night or two earlier. He had then bearded the lions of Stevenage, in Hertfordshire, the village chosen as Number One New Town. Happily, he seemed to have survived the experience, and moved the Second Reading of the Bill in tones that would have

turned almost any lion's roar to a coo.

However, a lot of critics did a bit of roaring on their own account, and it was quite late at night again before the Second Reading was granted.

Thursday, May 9th.—Nothing particularly unexpected happened to-day, and everybody seemed a trifle disappointed.

Things looked promising for a time, for Mr. EDEN got back on to the subject of Egypt. But it was only to announce that he would want a full debate as soon as possible.

Mild but Effective

"If anyone should be found drunk and becomes a nuisance, he must be punished. It would be a mild but effective form of punishment if such a person is arrested and his head shaved off before he is let loose."

Letter in the Bombay "Free Press Journal."

"LONDON PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA requires Office Boy. Excellent prospects."

Advt. in "Daily Telegraph."

There is a baton in every knapsack.

"No Scenery"

THE vogue for plays with no scenery, we learn, may have interesting developments. Miss Ruth Draper began it—or some say the Chinese. The difference is that Miss Draper is very quiet, and the Chinese players make a shattering noise. We remember visiting a Chinese theatre in Vancouver, where the pale attendant in the Circle said that he took an aspirin every hour. We remember too being privileged to visit Miss Draper, "back-stage," after one of her magical performances. We had seen the stage full of her imaginary characters: and somehow one expected to see them at the back. But no pretty ladies prattled in the corridors or pattered up the stairs. No admirers knocked at the dressing-room doors—at least, only one. No harassed wardrobe-mistress, call-boy, stage-manager; no queue for the telephone; no weary stage-hands or dressers. All was silent and deserted. Just one woman in one small dressing-room.

But, whether it is done in the Draper, the Chinese, or the modern American style—how economical, and how convenient! No tiresome "scenery" to be designed and built, and painted and fitted together, to be hauled aloft by lengthy ropes (and jam on the first night), or be rolled out of the way by sweating men. No alarming ladders for the chorus to climb: no projecting bits to poke their eyes out in the dark. Nowadays, they tell us, they even dispense with curtains: there is just the empty stage, with the big blank wall at the back. Except for the audience, you might as well be in a warehouse or the docks.

And in this blank undecorated space they make you imagine all the things they haven't paid for. "This," they say, "is the front door of a house. And this is the house next door." And you swallow it—you swallow both. Nothing could be better.

All this is highly suggestive and attractive to the many anxious showmen who cannot lay their hands on a London theatre just now, what with theatres bombed, theatres occupied by religious or political movements, theatres used as dance-halls or sporting clubs, or bought by the film-folk. If so much can be done, they say, with a play without scenery, why not a play without a theatre? Having dispensed with canvas and paint, why bother with bricks and mortar? Why not, on a fine night, suddenly appear at Hyde Park Corner or Trafalgar Square—and

on a wet night give a show at Waterloo Station? This movement, we understand, goes hand in hand with another charming modernity, the actors suddenly emerging from the audience and climbing on to the stage. Nowadays one scarcely dares to ask an attendant for a programme for fear she is really the leading lady. But see how all this must help the No Theatre brigade. You will be buying an evening paper, shall we say, near the Strand, when suddenly the paper-man grips you by the elbow and, fixing his burning eyes on you, he hisses "Have you Faced Up to the Future?" Thereupon he leads you firmly across the road to the Square, followed by all the paper-queue, who turn out to be actors: and before you know where you are you are in Act One of *Whither?* Someone will conduct you to an imaginary stall and give you a notional programme. How you will pay for your seat, and whether the payment will be imaginary or what, are points, we understand, which have still to be decided.

Another coming novelty is the imaginary orchestra. After all, the main trend of Progress is to make the citizen do the work. In the old-fashioned days waiters used to bring him food: now he has to "queue up" and help himself. In the old days he lifted the telephone receiver and said what number he wanted: now he has to work hard at his dial and do eight actions instead of one. But because it is strangely called "Automatic" he loves it. The theatrical managers collect the entertainments tax from themselves, and the employers do all the real work on P.A.Y.E. The ordinary citizen fills up all the forms with information most of which the State possesses already. There seems no reason why the citizen should not be made to do more work in the theatre. Audiences are always expected to "bring something"—if it is only an ounce or two of goodwill or toleration. Now they will have to fall into line and bring more. If they can imagine a Tudor castle when all they can see is a kitchen-chair; if they can imagine a fascinating princess when they behold a fat soprano in a wig; confound it all, they can imagine an orchestra with 32 instruments. They will be helped, of course, by the manager or somebody. He will say "Down here are the seven first violins. They are playing an entrancing melody in three-four time. That is the harp. I expect you can hear her little *arpeggio*. Over there are the drums." All this will save

a great deal of money, and make it much easier to present musical plays in Trafalgar Square.

There is, of course, an even better way. The audience could stay at home, read the play and imagine the whole thing. It is true that, at present, there is hardly any paper on which to print plays. But they might have imaginary paper. A. P. H.

Slingsby and Towser

I HAD GONE Slingsby sprang to his feet. He had been silent for the last half-hour, a highly abnormal state of affairs, and I could see that he was disgusted about something.

"There you go!" he cried. "Towsering again! It's really too much."

"Towsering?"

"You know perfectly well what I mean," said Slingsby severely. "You and that red-faced man have been Towsering ever since I came in."

"Nobody asked you to come in," I pointed out. "And if by Towsering you mean exchanging news about our late comrades-in-arms I should have thought it was a very harmless—"

"Harmless!" cried Slingsby. "Towsering is the scourge of post-war society. All over the country you ex-Service oafs are asking each other 'What happened to old Towser?' and replying at inordinate length. It doesn't seem to occur to you that there may be, there almost certainly are, those present to whom the details of old Towser's military career are a tedious and indeed a distasteful topic, nor that much of the jargon in which they are couched is incomprehensible to a cultured ear. That chap Jumbo you were talking about, for instance—"

"Bimbo, you mean."

"Oh, all right, Bimbo. For a good ten minutes you and your friend George argued about some abstruse point—"

"My dear Slingsby," I interrupted, "I admit that we argued, and I am prepared to believe that we did so for ten minutes, but I will not allow you to describe as abstruse the perfectly simple question of whether it was as a G.S.O.2 or a G.S.O.3 that Bimbo was posted from O.E.T.A. to C.S.D.I.C. in the early summer of 1942."

Slingsby gave me a withering glance. "Equally simple," he said, "and equally fraught with general interest was your difference of opinion as to the date on which Archie joined Caw, whoever Caw was."



"Everybody happy?"

"Corps," I corrected him. "A colloquial abbreviation of Corps H.Q. The date was, as a matter of fact, of very considerable interest, because—as you would have gathered had you been able or willing to follow our conversation—if Archie joined Corps before they left Pegu George must have only just missed seeing him on his way through to Nyaunglebin."

"To the trivial mind," Slingsby said with a sigh, "I can only suppose that nothing seems trivial. But what I found so noteworthy about your insufferable reminiscences was the contrast between your passionate antiquarian interest in old Towser's war-time activities and your complete indifference to old Towser as a member of the peace-time community. Anyone would think, from the way you were mulling over the careers of what you call your comrades-in-arms, that you were bound to them by ties of the deepest affection. Yet you both confessed to an acute dislike for Bimbo and you appeared to welcome the probability that Archie would drink himself to death. Indeed the only one of your acquaintances whom either of you were at all anxious to see again was, if I remember rightly, a certain

Sprogers, and him only because he was suspected of having stolen George's sleeping-bag at Benghazi. That," concluded Slingsby, "is perhaps the most horrible feature of Towsering. One might condone or at least put up with the practice if it had its roots in sentiment, if Towser was ever an admirable or at least a sympathetic character. But he never is. You spend hours and hours dominating the conversation with an exchange of unimportant details about men whom you never liked and do not expect to see again."

I very seldom agree with Slingsby about anything, but I had to admit that there was something in his argument.

"I suppose we are rather bores," I said.

"You are indeed," said Slingsby, rising to go. "Intolerable bores. But contrast is the salt of life and I shall enjoy my dinner all the more for having sat through your beastly Towsering."

"Going to a party?"

"No. I am dining with Florizel Noke, the critic. I have a rod in pickle for him."

"Really?"

"Yes," said Slingsby, looking complacent and pulling on the grey suede

gloves which he always wears, "Noke slipped up rather badly in last month's *Perspective*. I don't suppose you read his essay on 'Dickens and Sex,' and if you had you certainly wouldn't have spotted his mistake. Poor old Noke" (here Slingsby was unable to repress a chuckle) "went and married Dickens from the wrong address. He got the name of the street right but the number of the house was wrong."

"Tck, tck," I said. "Pretty bad. But I thought you hated Dickens, Slingsby?"

"Can't stand him," Slingsby agreed. "Dreadful bourgeois stuff. Altogether a thoroughly bad influence."

"Well then . . ."

"Well then what?"

"Nothing," I said. "Good night."
P. F.

"It is a work that affords full scope for Sir Adrian Boult's superb sense of musical architecture, and I shall long remember the loving care lavished on it by the Orchestra under his direction in the course of a strenuous Promenade season last year and the tremendous effect it produced (not Scottish)."

Note in "Radio Times."

Why bring that up?

At the Play

"OUR TOWN" (NEW)

TAKE a line through *Lady Precious Stream* for presentation, Eugene O'Neill for tricks of thought-speech and Sinclair Lewis for content and you will get a hazy idea of the shape of this play. The haze will clear a little if you remember the author is Mr. THORNTON WILDER, who has a rare gift for shedding light on the simple and innocent things so that of a sudden they become profoundly significant. If I say it begins as a kind of Babbitt-Baedeker to the feel of existence in a small town in New Hampshire in 1901 and ends, having taken that life through a cycle, with a commentary of astonishing force on the progress of the dead, I am afraid that is as close as I can get to it, though such an account does slight justice to its charm or quality.

There are no curtains, and no scenery but for a few chairs and tables and a couple of porches. Leaning against the wall or wandering out into the imaginary main street to find another specimen for us is the distinguished author of *Green Pastures*, Mr. MARC CONNELLY. He is with us most of the time as the stage manager, introducing and explaining, slow, painstaking, gently humorous, the perfect Rotarian member with whom we are at once tuned in to the atmosphere of Grover's Corner. We get to know two families, whose joys and sorrows make up the rhythm of the play and bring us at length to the amazing scene in the churchyard, where the lately-dead, sitting in prim Sunday-school formation, wait patiently while being acclimatized to death. The human detail is picked out with extraordinary sureness, the vision it supports is a poet's in depth and language.

Being an experiment the play is likely to frighten some people, but to my mind it is fascinating. Badly done it would be unbelievably embarrassing, but Mr. CONNELLY handles it with brilliant discretion and is well supported by a large cast.

"FRIEDA" (WESTMINSTER)

Can the Germans be converted to decent ends? Mr. RONALD MILLAR, discussing the question very fairly in this intelligent and stirring play, takes the case of an R.A.F. pilot who, escaping from Germany just before the end of the war, brings with him as a matter of honour the girl who has helped him to get away. *Frieda* is a "good" German, taking pride in the Germany of Goethe and Beethoven but thoroughly ashamed of the Third

been allowed to volunteer as of sufficiently Polish origin. The war being over he is charitably received, but on the wedding eve is recognized by a returned P.O.W. in the village to be the prison guard responsible for his disfigurement. *Robert*, himself none too stable mentally after his imprisonment, is swung by *Frieda's* near-suicide from a sudden blind hatred of all Germans to discovery of his love for her. But, more shocked than any of them by the revelation of her brother's character, *Frieda* decides that her place is in Germany and refuses to go on with the marriage.

Mr. MILLAR (a young actor now appearing in *Murder on the Nile*) has succeeded in forging all this into a gripping story without much sacrifice of his theme. Miss IRENE HENTSCHEL's production provides a smooth launch and the acting is good. As *Frieda* Miss VALERIE WHITE gives a very well-judged performance, *Robert* is played tellingly by Mr. JACK ALLEN, and Miss BARBARA EVEREST as the kindly, muddled old mother, Miss BARBARA COUPER as the strong-minded aunt, and Miss URSULA HOWELLS as the unselfish sister-in-law all give an excellent account of themselves.

"BETTER LATE" (GARRICK)

The current standard of revue is low and this is no exception to it, in spite of having Miss BEATRICE LILLIE, Miss JOAN SWINSTEAD, Mr. WALTER CRISHAM and Mr. GEORGE BENSON on the bill. Miss LILLIE, short of anything like a crisp sketch, is driven back too much on burlesquing herself, which is fun, but only for a bit; she has several tolerable songs, and is at her best in a mass mockery of the 'twenties, which comes off well. Miss SWINSTEAD and Mr. CRISHAM draw even weaker hands; he has one quite good dance and one song with some point to it. Mr. BENSON has drawn a single ace which brings down the house, a lecture entitled "Men In Aprons" instructing backward husbands in the art of washing up. He delivers it beautifully. Readers of *Punch* may recall a series of articles by "H. F. E." under the same title, from which in fact this monologue is taken. ERIC.



MISS JOAN SWINSTEAD INTRODUCES SOME OF THE AUDIENCE TO THE STARS.

MR. WALTER CRISHAM, MISS BEATRICE LILLIE,
MR. GEORGE BENSON

Reich. When she and *Robert* arrive in England their reception is such that, though she loves him, she insists on postponing their marriage. But *Robert's* aunt, a politician who holds that Germany must be completely segregated for fifty disinfectant years, assures *Frieda* that the imbecile tenderheartedness of the English will have made things easy for her within six months.

And she is right. *Frieda's* natural honesty is hard to resist, and having been accepted by *Robert's* family and taken to a less Nordic hairdresser she agrees to marry. Enter, however, her brother, ex-Afrika Korps but now in the Polish Army, for which he had

At the Ballet

To journey back in time from the symphony orchestra to the tom-tom and rattle, from the sophisticated art of ballet to its primitive beginnings, you have only to take a bus from Covent Garden to Notting Hill Gate. At the tiny Twentieth Century Theatre BERTO PASUKA's *Ballets Nègres* are to be seen and heard—and felt too, for the primitive rhythms fill one with an overwhelming desire to join in with stamping feet and clapping hands. The theatre seems too unbearably small and stuffy to contain the furious energy released by the negro dancers.

Their dancing is neither beautiful nor ugly. It is nearly all performed in a small circle (for the stage is tiny) and consists of a great deal of the *danse du ventre* and of simple extemporized movements and gestures repeated endlessly, like the throbbing rhythms of the music, with hypnotic effect. At moments of emotional climax some of the dancers tremble violently with their whole body, while others leap high in the air with arms stretched heavenwards. The effect is extraordinary and almost frightening, for it gives an impression of power welling up into the dancers' bodies from the centre of the earth. Epstein's statues "Night" and "Morning" at St. James's Park come to mind, for they produce the same impression of dark primeval force—the force that makes the trees and flowers of the jungle grow with a luxuriance and power so overwhelming that it makes one shudder.

The subjects of the ballets are curious but are perfectly suited to this primitive form of expression, which has the intensity of a religious rite. One ballet is called "De Prophet." In this a frenzied negro preacher tries to fly to heaven to impress a crowd of village converts. He fails to perform the miracle and is led away to prison, whereat a terrible and blood-curdling groan goes up from the converts who see their promised vision of heaven taken away. The fanatical faith of the preacher is powerfully conveyed by BERTO PASUKA, who is both principal dancer and choreographer. There are two other curious and vivid characters in this strange ballet—the priestess *Madda Jane*, who feeds good spirits, and *Huntta Man*, who destroys evil ones by cutting them in pieces with the edge of his hand. Another ballet called "They Came" is about the coming of Christianity to Africa and the struggle between science and the witch-doctor. The *Missionary* is of course followed by the *Business Man*,

and this portrait of the white man seen through the eyes of the black is far from flattering. The last ballet in this programme is "Market Day"—an amusing sketch of a West Indian market, full of movement and vivid character, but less impressive and more obviously Western-inspired than the others.

The costumes and settings of these ballets are of the simplest, but they are very effective. This is a show that all lovers of the dance should see. It is highly original, full of vitality, and something quite new to London.

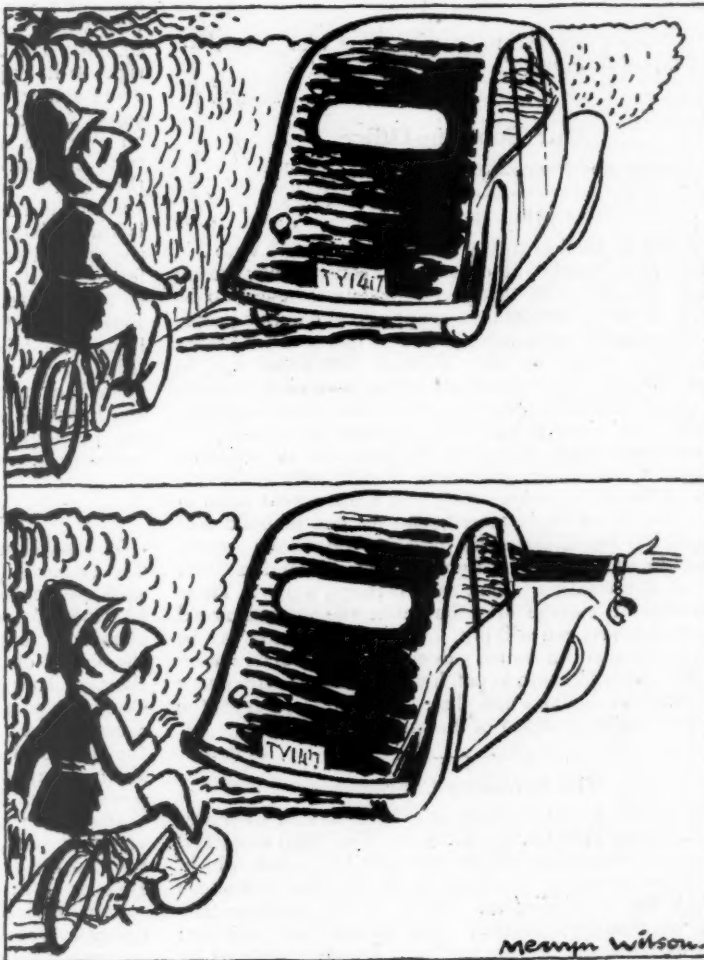
After the *Ballets Nègres* the new ballet at Covent Garden, *Variations Symphoniques*, is like emerging from a steaming jungle and finding oneself on the top of a high Alp. It is danced to CÉSAR FRANCK'S *Variations Symphoniques* for piano and orchestra (the solo pianist is ANGUS MORRISON), and has no story or programme of any kind. It is a rendering of the music

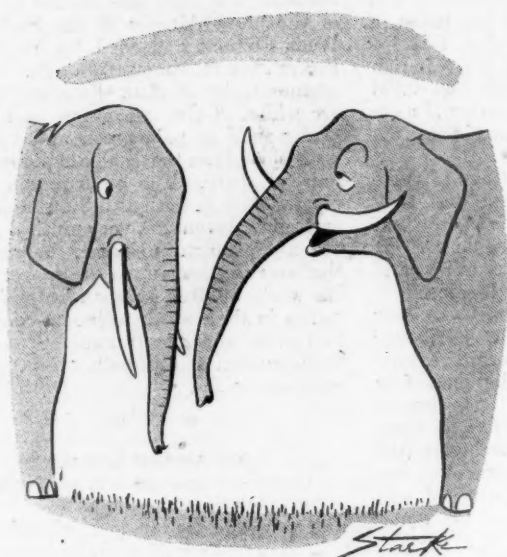
in classical ballet-dancing, and is very beautiful and very well danced by six of the finest dancers in the Sadler's Wells Company, headed by MARGOT FONTEYN and MICHAEL SOMES. The costumes, by SOPHIE FEDOROVITCH, are white, of Grecian design, and the background is pale green and white with black lines that suggest a sinuous musical stave. The choreography is crystal-clear in design, full of graceful and subtle invention, very musical and extremely difficult to dance. It makes the same demands upon the dancers as the works of Bach do upon instrumentalists in the way of technical control and purity of style. It is quite the most distinguished of FREDERICK ASHTON'S creations so far.

D. C. B.

Yet Another Queue

"CHEST OF CARPENTER'S TOOLS For Sale.
—Apply Standing, — Farm."
Advt. in local paper.





"Did I ever tell you about the time when I was stationed in Poona?"

Our Booking-Office

(By Mr. Punch's Staff of Learned Clerks)

Mine Be the Cot

It would be tactless to say which side put up "Vote . . . and Buy More Goods" all over a rural constituency during the last election: even though no goods were going to be released anyhow, and country people—real country people—do not usually want goods. Unless dithered by propaganda, they want, as Mrs. ESTHER MEYNELL says in *Cottage Tale* (CHAPMAN AND HALL, 12/6), their own cottages, their own land, their own pigs, their own prize vegetable marrows. All these things, with freedom thrown in, they got more easily and securely in the past; and it is to Mrs. MEYNELL's credit that she keeps nostalgically revived a corner of Sussex in which utility and beauty went hand in hand. She tried to do more. She set out to build real cottages, but was defeated by by-laws. So, as the present volume shows, she bought a genuine antique, and creation ceded to appreciation. That was, perhaps, a pity. There are dozens of cottage arts that even the over-governed and not-so-young can still ply. Fruit, for instance, can be grown in the smallest walled garden; and there is no reason to confine one's pleasure in patchwork to historic specimens while there are curtains and chair-covers to make from the more serviceable portions of discarded cotton frocks.

H. P. E.

The Feminine Character

Miss VIOLA KLEIN's study of *The Feminine Character* (KEGAN PAUL, TRENCH, TRUBNER AND Co., 12/6) is marked by a sternly masculine objectivity and by a style which, even after allowance has been made for the limitations imposed by a sociological theme, seems unnecessarily bereft of feminine subtlety and charm—for example: "It is as impossible to do justice to human existence by

applying to it epistemological criteria as it is to judge organic life by the application of geometrical norms." Had she written more simply, the justice of her main argument would have been more apparent. After a brief but interesting survey of the position of women during the nineteenth century, and a detailed analysis of the attitude to women expressed by Havelock Ellis, Otto Weininger, Freud, W. I. Thomas and other psychologists or students of social conditions, Miss KLEIN concludes that there is no fundamental difference between the sexes. She does not deny the existence of typically feminine traits, but she shows that many traits loosely regarded as exclusively feminine are due to other factors than sex. So long as women were excluded from public life they were thought unfit for it, but the last two wars have fully proved their administrative and practical capacity. They are losing the feeling of inferiority produced in the past by their exclusion from male activities, and with this feeling of inferiority is vanishing those characteristics which, Miss KLEIN justly remarks, are common to all subject groups, and not the exclusive property of women. H. K.

"There, but for the Grace of God . . ."

It is a saturnine humour that can see our conduct and destiny as much on a par with those of the ant-hill; but apart from the higher manifestations of the human spirit, with which he is not concerned, Dr. CARYL P. HASKINS' *Of Ants and Men* (ALLEN AND UNWIN, 10/6) has every right to its enjoyable irony. Ants, he says, have a longer evolutionary pedigree than man, and one less subject to gaps. So you can follow the rise and fall of ant nations all over the world and see exactly how ant-democracies turn into ant-Fascismo or ant-Bolshevism. After that they die; because, as Spengler says, "when a house-type vanishes it means that a race is extinguished." The climax is usually induced by a high state of specialization in which the specialists, fed by slaves, get too uppish to grow (or forage for) their own food: even—as in the case of the large, handsome, red *Polyergus*—to ring the bell for lunch. Pleasanter ants, the sort, one supposes, that Solomon had in mind and Voltaire too would have liked, are the attine tribe who cultivate their own fungus gardens, employing a staff of minute weeders. On this herbivorous basis, Dr. HASKINS insists, rests every social system with enduring possibilities. City states, however civilized, are, as parasites, doomed to disappear. H. P. E.

The Cossacks

The style in which Mr. MAURICE HINDUS has written *The Cossacks* (COLLINS, 10/6) is sufficiently illustrated in such a sentence as the following: "As warrior and individual he [the Cossack] has etched himself with a gory and glamorous robustness on the pages of Russian history, on the fabric of Russian folkways." There is certainly no shortage either of gore or glamour in this history of the Cossacks, past and present. Mr. HINDUS opens with an account of an interview granted him during the war by the Cossack General Kirichenko, who talks much as Mr. HINDUS writes—"Here was more than beauty, here were power, triumph, joy, something so lovely, so enchanting that deep in my heart I felt we'd win an overwhelming victory." After this prelude, the reader is transported back to the early history of the Cossack republics on the Dnieper and the Don, and shown some Cossack heroes in action, Yermak, who invaded Siberia, Stenka Razin, a Cossack Wat Tyler, and Yemelyan Pugatchev, who led an unsuccessful revolution against Catherine the Great.

Mr. HINDUS then returns to the present age, and gives a number of personal impressions of the Kuban Cossacks, gathered during three visits, in 1926 when the Cossacks were resisting the liquidation of the kulaks, in 1936 after they had submitted, and in 1944 when the Kuban was beginning to reorganize its life after the German invasion. It is a pity that a book containing so much of interest should not have been written in a more convincing style.

H. K.

Alas! the Music Halls

Did you know that Harry Tate's moustache, at one time such a pleasing feature of the English landscape, was suggested by Marie Lloyd after seeing him swimming in the Thames with a lump of river-weed under his nose? Or that Captain Slater, who introduced apparently boiling lead into his apparently asbestos mouth, had to be taken off owing to protests from St. Thomas's at the alarming number of fainting cases with which it had suddenly to deal? Such fascinating information is to be found in plenty in *Stars Who Made the Halls* (LAURIE, 21/-), a chattily-written but entertaining survey by Mr. S. THEODORE FELSTEAD. He describes how the early halls grew out of the harmonious pub such as Charles Morton's "Canterbury Arms" in the Lambeth Marshes (he took it in 1849), where for sixpence you enjoyed singers from the West End and had your choice of a pint, half a quarter of gin or a cigar; and how they reached their peak of glory in the eighties and nineties and were then steadily crushed out by the big new variety theatres, most of which were later to go down themselves before the invading cinema. That this colourful and amusing world was a very real aspect of the Victorian period is something too often forgotten by those who sneer at our grandfathers. It had an honesty and style to which we, from our era of robot entertainment, can only look back with shame and regret. Mr. FELSTEAD curses the stage microphone for inflating voiceless nonentities into stars (and how one agrees!) but he gives the B.B.C. full marks for keeping so many of the best old songs alive. E. O. D. K.

Life in Death

Miss PHYLIS BOTTOME goes from strength to strength as a novelist, and her new book, *The Lifeline* (FABER, 9/6), shows her at the height of the power she has of making beauty shine through ugliness and terror. Now she tells the story of a young English schoolmaster sent by the Foreign Office to Austria to establish contacts for one of our agents before England went into the war. He was persuaded by a little band of patriots, among them a priest, a woman doctor and an artist, to return to Austria himself when the time came. He agreed, and began to study the symptoms of a maniac depressive, so that he could qualify for admission to the mental hospital (run by the woman doctor) which was to be his base. At the appointed time he was dropped by parachute and began to work for England and Nazi-oppressed Austria in most grisly surroundings, continuing until he was crippled in a Nazi torture chamber. The publisher's assurance that the book is not a war-novel seems strange, considering that its action takes place during the war and in a war-stricken country, yet it is true because the author's real theme is the battle-ground of the spirit, and her "lifeline" is Eternal Life. She makes the doctor say of a Nazi: "He loved killing. I suppose to kill is really a form of intimacy if you have never been trained how to live." The priest, describing a concentration camp, says, "You know how savage a lost dog can get: they were like that. You see, a human being has no home but God." B. E. B.

Tchaikovsky: Two Studies

HERBERT WEINSTOCK's *Tchaikovsky* (CASSELL, 21/-) is the first full-length biography of the composer to appear in English since the cultural authorities of the U.S.S.R. began to publish the mass of Tchaikovskiana that had lain unread since his death. With the aid of this material Mr. WEINSTOCK has produced a most valuable book. Its detachment and objectivity make the strange and often horrible story of Tchaikovsky's life appear the more fantastic. The Fates, having decreed that he be born with a neurotic, super-sensitive temperament, and early develop a passionate devotion to his mother, decreed also that he should lose her when he was fourteen, a shock from which he never recovered; that, being sexually abnormal (and heartily ashamed of it) he should contract a marriage, partly from a mistaken sense of chivalry and partly from less honourable motives, with a nymphomaniac; and lastly that, suffering as he did from the misanthropy that springs from the fear of disillusionment, he should suffer the feared disillusionment at the hands of a fellow-misanthrope, his "beloved friend" and patroness, Nadezhda von Meck. The cruel way in which she ended their fourteen years' intimate friendship—one of the strangest love-affairs in history, since they communicated only by letter—almost certainly shortened his life. This story of abnormality, thwarted passion and mental suffering sublimated in music makes intensely interesting though tragic reading. *Tchaikovsky—A Symposium*, edited by GERALD ABRAHAM (LINDSAY DRUMMOND, 9/6), complements Mr. WEINSTOCK's biography, for it consists almost entirely of detailed criticism of the music, chapters being contributed by eleven critics. The best chapter is that by the editor on Tchaikovsky's operas, which are almost entirely unknown in this country. The rest of the book, owing to the inevitable overlapping and long stretches of technical analysis, is very heavy going. D. C. B.



Noises Off

YOU want to feel well when you stay with James because the chances are you will find yourself at the wrong end of a tombola or else facing backward girls at basketball. I felt frightfully tired, and said so.

"You can be as peaceful as you like," James said. "I thought we'd take a little drive before lunch."

"Fine," I agreed. "You've certainly picked a good spot in which to eke out your gluttoned existence." It was true. As far as the eye could peer Nature had spread herself in a big way. Nothing had been spared to make the prospect a success, and for once the dirty finger-prints of man were not to be seen.

"And what a healing quiet," I added. All at once the calm was shattered by a giant voice which seemed to come from nowhere in particular. It was Jove talking out of the soles of his boots.

"Attention, please! Will Sergeant J. P. McGlurkin come at once to Hut 40B?"

James's face had gone the dull purple which in happier days one might have associated with port.

"Brutes!" he growled.

"What the devil was that?"

"Training camp the other side of the hill. New C.O. insists on having it festooned with loud-speakers."

"Have you protested?"

"Have I protested? The War Office empties at the mention of my name. But this chap says the efficiency of his—"

"Attention, please! Will Corporal O. P. Glottis go to the M.O.?"

"Let's drive," said James.

"Have you no redress?" I asked, as the car swung out into the lane.

James smiled gently. "I thought I'd take you up Bundle Hill," he said. "The bluebells are a knock-out."

At the top of the hill he turned sharply across smooth grass and stopped in the shade of a great beech-tree, on the edge of a precipice.

"What's all that down there?" I asked.

"That? Why, that's the camp," said James, fumbling under a sack at the back.

"James!" I cried sternly. "What are you up to?" For he had produced a large trumpet and was busily screwing it into a socket in the roof.

"The things I promised through this at the election," he said. "It's just as well I didn't get into power." He now plugged a small mike into the

dash. "You'll find it more entertaining if you stand away a little. Just tell me if it's live?"

He coughed lightly and the trumpet barked thunderously over the camp.

"Very much so."

"Good."

"Attention, please!" cried Jove. "Will Private B. Hoskins go at once to the Equipment Office?"

James instantly went into action.

"Give ear, chums!" he roared.

"We've changed our minds. Will Private B. Hoskins be good enough to join Sarge McGlurkin for a bitter with the Adj.? Who will also be glad to see Corporal Glottis as soon as he's done up his shirt."

Life in the arena below seemed curiously arrested. It was like looking on to an anthill as the first wave of D.D.T. rolled in. James made the V-sign through the window.

"Attention, please!" yelled a furious Jove. "Whoever has tapped the loud-speaker circuit is to report immediately to the Guard Room."

"Wash that out, boys!" James parried. "On second thoughts he must be such a brave chap we're putting him in for a big gold gong."

The ants, several hundred of them, were standing absolutely rooted.

"Attention!" roared Jove. "Will all officers please come at once to Headquarters?"

"Achtung, kinder!" thundered James. "Will all privates with ginger moustaches of a span of more than one foot kindly gather on the square for their weekly Kiss-in-the-Ring with the R.S.M.?"

The ants began to move, spasmodically, then one or two broke into a run.

"We are very happy to announce that the Sergeants' Bluebell Ramble is at last being resuscitated. It will leave the Mess at 1430. This will in no way interfere with the Pink Elephant Sale in the Naafi at 1700."

Jeeps began to dart rather rapidly about the camp.

"Hark, larks! The subject for next week's poetry marathon will be as follows: 'The Smile On the Face of the Colonel.' Entries should be written on all three sides of the paper and inserted at sundown in the Commanding Officer's In-tray."

All below was now in a pleasing state of chaos.

"You naughty, naughty boy!" bel-lowed James. "Come to the Mess and be smacked!"

He got out and, unlimbering the bits

and pieces, shoved them carefully under the sack again. As we drove quickly down the hill he grinned happily.

"That should stir things up a bit," he said.

"It certainly should," I agreed.

"Poisonous things, loud-speakers."

"Foul."

"I shall ban them directly I get into office."

"Here, James! What on earth are we going in here for?"

"Oh, didn't I tell you? We're lunching with the C.O." ERIC.

From a Grateful Country

NOW that I have actually received R.A.F. Form 2781(A), telling me quite definitely that I am to have my war gratuity on or about the fifty-seventh day after leaving the dispersal centre, I must really consider how I am going to spend the money. Up to now I have not been counting on it, remembering occasions in the past when false optimism over the net result of pay-scale revisions has blinded me to the peculiarities of Service accountancy; but here is R.A.F. Form 2781(A), saying with self-conscious bluntness, "You are entitled to a payment for War Gratuity . . ." The thing is obviously genuine.

During the last year or so I have been given plenty of warning against any brash, rash, thriftless or unprofitable disposal of my gratuity. The national newspapers, the interests of the ex-Serviceman close to their great motherly hearts as always, have advised me not to plunge into the purchase of a business until it has been closely looked into by somebody who knows something about it, nor to rush blindly into partnership with the first advertiser who offers me an executive post with large salary in exchange for an investment of £1,000; the B.B.C. have brought to their avuncular microphones a galaxy of professional criminologists, honest fellows who have taken me by the ear and bumbled gravely about the confidence tricksters who will be lying in wait for my gratuity in every tea-shop, train, bus and art gallery; the squadron-leader who bade me good-bye on behalf of the Air Council, rather hurriedly, for it was nearly lunch-time, asked me whether I was "all fixed up" for civilian life, and although he made no direct inquiry about how I planned to spend

my gratuity he did urge me as we shook hands not to do anything he wouldn't do, and I think that is what he was getting at. He was an elderly, scrubbed, held-in sort of man with a cautious air, who looked as if sudden wealth would have had its work cut out to turn his head.

All these warnings come back to me now with added force. How am I to make use of this expression of the taxpayer's gratitude? "AFTER THE LAST WAR," booms one of the pamphlets under whose burden I staggered out of the dispersal centre, "NUMBERS OF EX-SERVICE MEN LOST THEIR GRATUITIES BY INVESTING THEM IN ENTERPRISES WHICH HAD LITTLE CHANCE OF SUCCESS. BE WARNED, THEREFORE..."

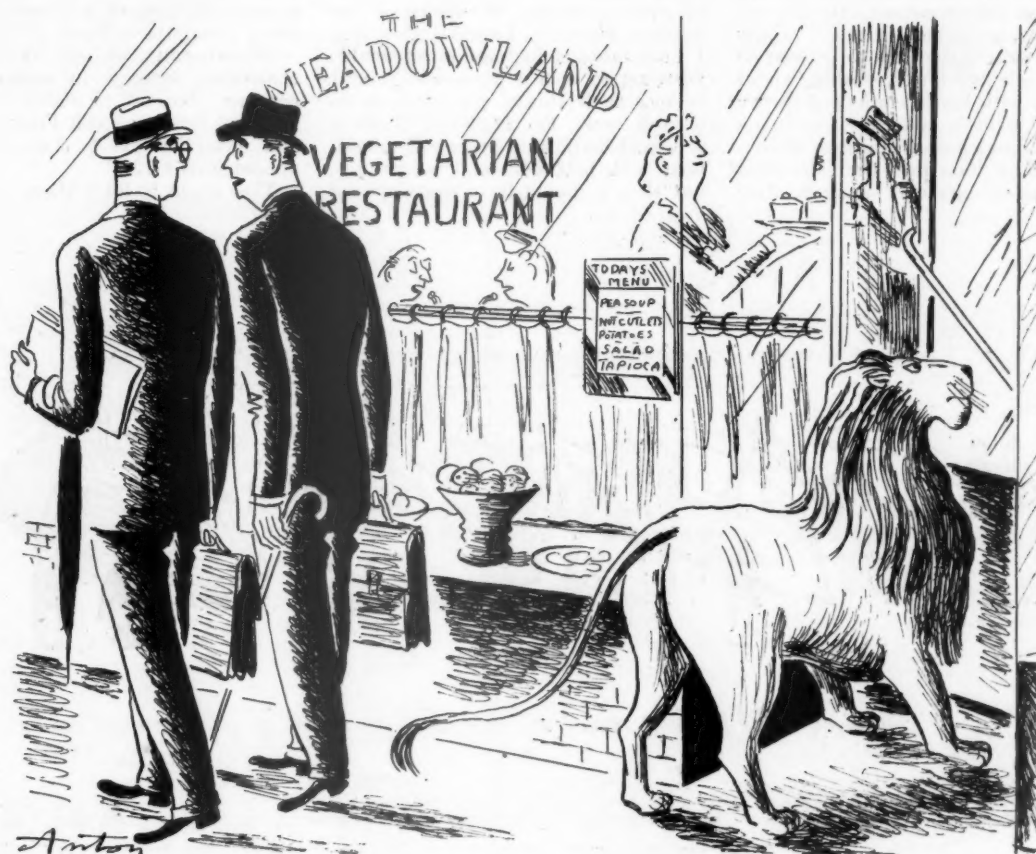
So I must think pretty seriously about it now. Naturally, at this crossroads in my life, with money to burn, I have toyed with the idea of breaking entirely fresh ground. Money is the

key to so many gates hitherto closed to me. I have only to glance at the front page of *The Times*: "Laundry, £3,000; old-established; net profits exceed £1,000 per annum." *Exceed*, mark you! But then should I succeed as a laundry-owner? Should I be tempted to insist overmuch on the quality of my personal washing at the expense of that of my clients, for example? I don't know. Let me turn to a humbler publication, specializing in the disposal of more homely enterprises. How should I like to own a "very prsprs. News., Conf., Tob., Staty."? Mine for a mere £1,200, with handsome weekly takings. I rather like the idea of that. I can see myself moving unhurriedly about behind a neat counter, rearranging a showcard here, flicking away a dead wasp there; I can see the cosy, shabby little room behind the shop, of which the waiting customer is vouchsafed only the most mysterious and tantalizing glimpse. I can see myself

emerging from it in my slippers, looking over my glasses and saying sadly, "Sorry, no news., conf., tob., or staty."—and then going smugly back to my pipe, my dish of toffees and all the newspapers and stationery that my heart can desire.

But then, again, those misgivings arise. I have been warned. How do I know that I might not have one of those terrible little toy post offices forced on to me to lumber up one end of my neat counter? Should I be entitled to repel the advances of the Postmaster-General? Or should I be obliged, at the bidding of a Socialist state, to give up my shop-parlour and stand there for hours weighing ill-wrapped parcels and moistening an indelible pencil on my tongue?

It is a responsibility, this wealth. Sometimes I feel I shall have to throw myself on the mercy of the business world by advertising my money. I saw just the sort of thing in *The Times*



"On second thoughts—wasn't that rather odd?"

the other day: "Energetic gentleman wishes acquire controlling interest in retail drapery or general store. Capital available £20,000." Except of course that I am not really very energetic, and have no interest, controlling or otherwise, in retail drapery. But you can see the sort of depths the bewildered ex-Serviceman is liable to plumb in his anxiety to get that gratuity of his active and dynamic, instead of lying about lumpishly at the bottom of a Post Office Savings Account.

Many of my war-time friends, chatting over the camp fire or in the ablutions, used to speak wistfully of buying a public-house with their gratuities. It is an idea, certainly; but there again the cautious man will pause to consider. He will have noticed, with faint and ever-recurring but nevertheless genuine surprise, that public-house personnel (I have only been out of uniform a month, remember) are up and about long before they throw open their doors to the first drinkers of the day, and are still up and about for some hours after the cry of "Time, gentlemen, please." Early in the morning they are to be seen on their hands and knees, sloshing about the floor with horrid cloths and greasy buckets; a little later, still unshaven owing to pressure of business, shovelling broken glass into the side-street dust-bins, or dejectedly superintending

the rolling of barrels up and down planks, with worried sideways glances at huge sheets of paper covered with small and intricate calculations. Long after the hour of closing enforced by the law they are engaged in taking stock, cashing up, dragging the more extravagant customers from under tables and letting their personal friends surreptitiously out of the back door. No, those who wish may pay their £4,000 or £5,000 for a public-house. I have decided against it.

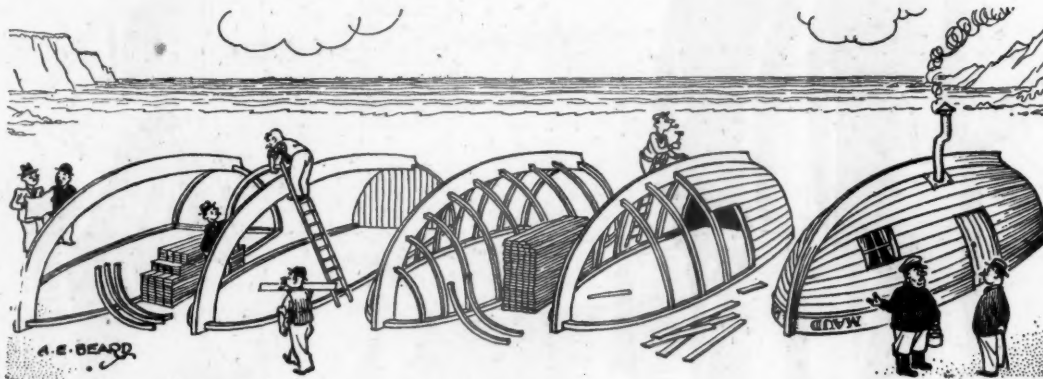
The property market offers great scope at present of course. One of my corporals who came to see me a few weeks after his demobilization and a few days before my own, mentioned that he had bought three hotels for £22,000 on the previous Tuesday morning and sold them for £28,000 on the Wednesday afternoon. I shouldn't contemplate anything quite on that scale, naturally, though it does seem a nice simple way to make a living. (I gathered from him that he never had to let his gratuity out of his hands at all—just a matter of signing a few papers.) However, I must confess that I have always had an unreasonable yearning to own a house-boat, and I believe such things are going quite cheaply now. For £1,000 or £1,500 it is possible to pick up a nice little house-boat with bathroom and everything; but then I should have the worry of

deciding whether to live in it myself or just use it for week-ends and profiteering on Boat-Race day; and there is always the possibility that if somebody offered me £3,000 for it I should be tempted to sell, and find myself confronted with the same problem all over again.

Other things I have thought of investing my gratuity in are a private nursery school, a night-club, a silver-fox farm, a wholesale hop-manure business and an original song-hit entitled, "Who Said the Moon Was Blue?" written by a cousin of my wife's. At times I have thought my fortune might be safely invested in any of these, particularly after listening at some length to those persons who respectively put forward the suggestions. But all those warnings keep ringing in my ears. It would be dreadful to throw away the proceeds of my five years of peril and privation. I think I shall perhaps draft an advertisement after all, and have all the responses thoroughly investigated by a reputable firm of solicitors. Something along these lines:

"Gentleman wishes to acquire controlling interest in remunerative concern. Capital available"—just a moment, let me consult Form 2781(A) and get the exact sum—"Capital available, £54 12s."

That ought to fetch them. J. B. B.



"Then along comes the local council and says they 'ave to put up four for every one by private enterprise."

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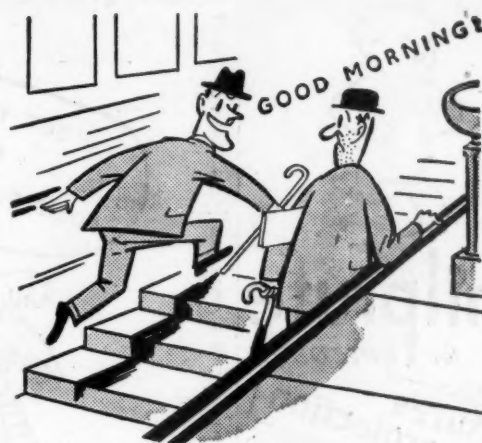
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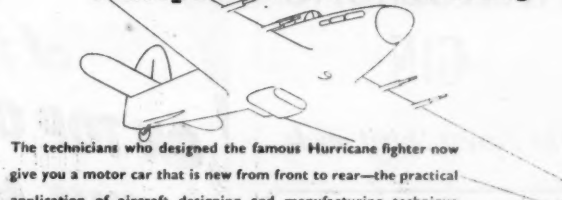
Not too little..

not too much..

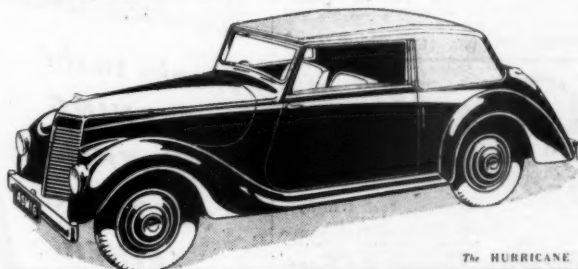
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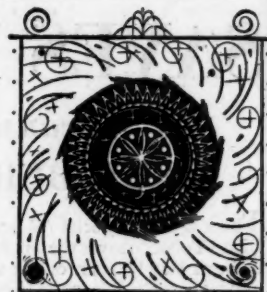
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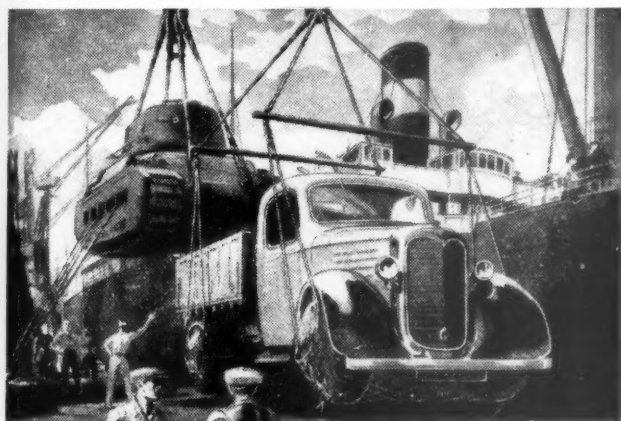
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Careful experiments by our domestic investigation department when shopping, have shown that if a parcel gets wet, three things are liable to happen: (a) The paper breaks. (b) The contents fall out, and (c) Our wives become annoyed. Not unduly influenced by the pressure under the last heading, B.I.P. have investigated the use of plastic resin in the processing of paper pulp. This, in turn, can have three important effects—1. Paper makers may apply the process to the manufacture of wrapping papers. 2. When this paper gets wet it remains strong—even if it is saturated. 3. Our wives will agree that we may have some uses after all.



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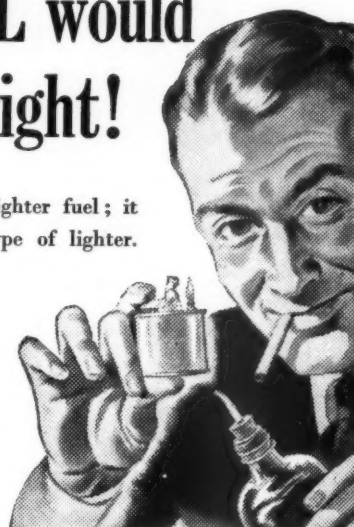
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